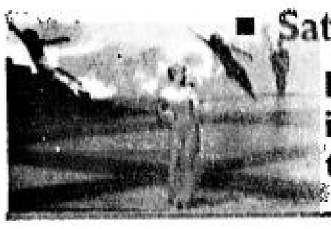


■ Saturday Special / E1
Music and magic in Celine Dion's theatrical show

■ Sports / A21
Jenny among leaders in LPGA

■ World / A10
Bin Laden's No. 2 man probably cornered

■ Super / 11
A one-night stand with Wolfgang

■ Business / B1
Imports up in January; trade gap widens to $336 M

Erap disowns lawyer, says GMA not aware of villa visit

By Armand N. Nocum

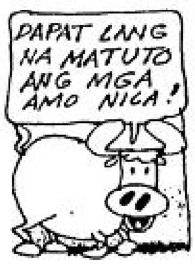
LAWYER Raymond Fortun yesterday said Malacañang was responsible for allowing deposed President Joseph Estrada to stay in his rest house near Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal. But Estrada disowned, not only Fortun's statement, but also the lawyer himself.

ERAP DISOWNS/ A17

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Be nice to foreign maids, Singaporeans ordered

SINGAPORE—The government of Singapore is planning to improve the welfare of foreign maids by encouraging them to agree to more detailed contracts with their employers, Acting Manpower Minister Ng



BE NICE/ A8

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Saturday, March 20, 2004 ★★ 72 pages / 10 sections / vol. 19 / no. 103 P18

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Maynilad 'bailout' hit

Palace says no politics, no deal with Lopez family

By TJ Burgonio, Juliet L. Javellana, Elizabeth Sanchez and Christine Gaylican

THE GOVERNMENT'S reported takeover of the debt-saddled Maynilad Water Services was a "midnight bailout" of Benpres Holdings, majority owner of the water utility controlled by the influential Lopez family, former Congressman Herminio Aquino said yesterday.

The alleged bailout could be part of a deal between President Macapagal-Arroyo and the Lopez family in exchange for popular broadcaster Sen. Noli de Castro's joining the administration ticket as the President's running mate, Aquino said.

De Castro is a top talent in the Lopez-owned ABS-CBN television network.

"It's a step backward for the government ... Noli de Castro has to answer and come up with a stand on the issue and clarify his role," said Aquino, who is the vice presidential running mate of Raul Roco in the Alyansa ng Pag-asa ticket.

The justice department on Thursday announced that it had reached an agreement with Benpres in which the latter would write off its holdings in Maynilad, its joint venture with France's Suez Group, which meant a conversion of P8 billion of Maynilad's unpaid concession fees into equity.

"The conversion of P8 billion in unpaid concession fees into a 61-percent stake in a bankrupt and heavily indebted firm would only aggravate the financial problems of government," said Ibon Databank advocacy specialist Arnold Padilla.

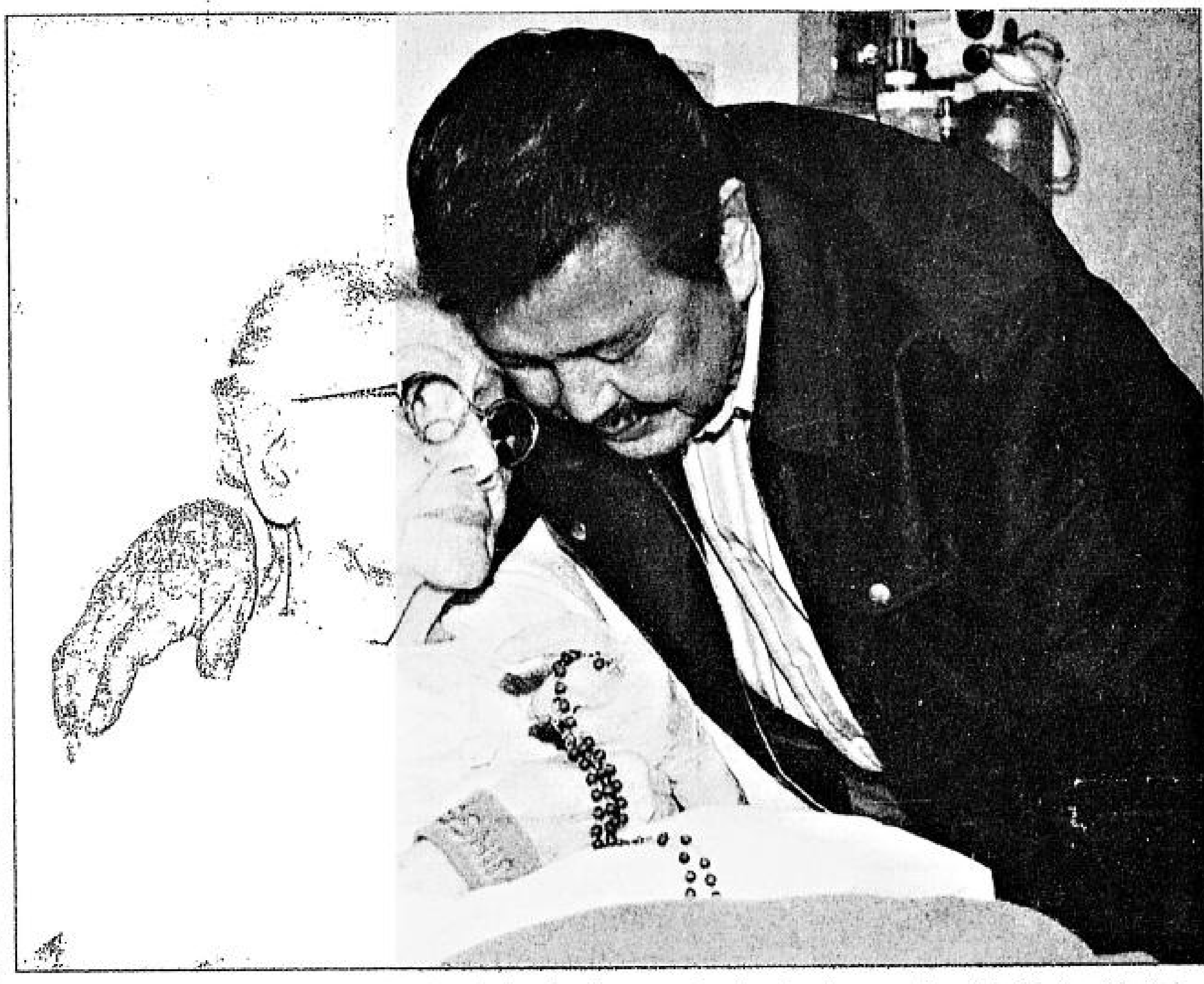
Padilla said that as majority owner of Maynilad, the government would have to assume the firm's remaining debts pegged at P11 billion. It may also have to guarantee future debts of the company to rehabilitate Maynilad.

"Instead of collecting on its debt, the government and the people will end up with the debt," he said.

The agreement marked the exit of the Lopez family, majority stockholder of Benpres, from the water distribution business and followed a long dispute between Maynilad and state regulator Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

Malacañang yesterday clarified that the withdrawal of Benpres from Maynilad was a "reorganization" aimed at ensuring that water services are not disrupted and not part of a deal for a gov-

MAYNILAD/ A8


JOAN BONDOC

AN ANSWERED prayer for Doña Mary Ejercito who's saying the rosary when her favorite son arrives at the San Juan Medical Center for a court-authorized 36-hour visit with his mother on the feast of the ex-President's patron saint, St. Joseph. Note the old lady's wristband with grandson Jinggoy's name on it. She turns 99 on May 2.

INSEPARABLE

Erap says visit gave ma new pep

By Armand Nocum and Luige del Puerto

BY JOSEPH Estrada's account, the condition of his ailing mother was eased considerably after seeing him.

"She's no longer depressed. Her condition immediately improved after she saw me," Estrada said in a phone call to the INQUIRER yesterday afternoon. The ousted President is on a 36-hour court-issued pass from Camp Capinpin that lapses at 5 a.m. today.

Estrada said his mother, Mary Ejercito, was praying the rosary when he arrived at her fifth-floor room in the government-run San Juan Medical Center.

She raised her hands, still clutching the rosary, at sight of him, and took him in her arms when he reached her bedside.

"*Nasagot ng Diyos ang dasal ko nang nakita kita* (I knew God answered my prayers when I saw you)," Estrada quoted his mother as saying.

San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, one of Estrada's sons, said Estrada's first words to his mother were: "Are you happy now to see me?"

For a few minutes, he said, the two were inseparable as other members of the family—including Estrada's wife, Sen. Luisa Ejercito; daughter, Jackie Ejercito-Lopez; and nephew, Pagsanjan Mayor George Estregan Jr.—looked on.

Ejercito said emotion ran high at the mother-and-son reunion: "If my father cried talking about my grandmother in a TV interview, you can imagine how happy he was to see her today."

Mrs. Ejercito was taken to the hospital

ERAP SAYS/ A18

Peso plunges to all-time low: 56.38 to a dollar

By Doris C. Dumlao

A SUDDEN surge in dollar demand in late trading, particularly from offshore currency players, and the assassination attempt Friday on Taiwan's President Chen Shui-Bian, yesterday sent the peso tumbling to a new all-time low of 56.38 to the dollar.

Traders also attributed the peso's weakness to fears that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas would not defend the local currency after the BSP did not intervene when the peso hit the previous record low of 56.35, as it normally does by unloading dollars through some foreign banks.

Earlier this week, BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the central bank would not use its reserves to defend an "unrealistic FX rate." The BSP also said it sees reserves falling to $15 billion at the end of 2004 from $16.9 billion at the end of 2003.

The peso opened yesterday relatively firmer at 56.28 but lost ground in afternoon trade to close at its intra-day low of 56.38 compared to Thursday's close of 56.27. The peso is now down 1.6 percent this year. Total value turnover rose to $117.50 from the previous $82.8 million.

"The peso's weakening was due mainly to corporate demand, particularly of manufacturing, telecoms and oil companies. There was short covering ahead of the weekend," BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco said.

"Some market players also cited the incident in Taiwan because there was a reaction on the NT (New Taiwanese) dollar," he said.

Traders said the peso sales seemed to have started in the offshore market after news of Taiwan's president being shot and wounded in the stomach while campaigning in southern Taiwan on the eve of the presidential election led to speculators buying the dollar against the region.

Offshore traders bought the dollar not just against the Taiwan dollar but also

PESO/ A9

REUTERS

"AMERICAN Idol" Fil-Ams, Jasmine Trias (left) gets rave reviews; Camile Velasco does, too, but Simon says she is "petrified."

Fil-Am girls advance in American Idol derby

By Janet Susan R. Nepales
PDI Correspondent

LOS ANGELES—Two teenage Filipino-American singers from Hawaii have survived the first elimination round of the finals of the wildly popular US television talent show, "American Idol."

Jasmine Trias, 17, of Oahu and Camile Velasco, 18, of Mililani, earned enough votes from the 18 million cast by viewers of the "reality TV" show to remain in the talent search contest.

Fans from all over the United States texted or called in to vote after the first round of competition held late Tuesday.

"I am so excited to see Jasmine make it to the first round of eliminations," said Rudolfo Santos Trias, Jasmine's father, in an in-

FIL-AM/ A9

Taiwan president, VP survive slay attempt

TAIPEI, Taiwan—Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian and Vice President Annette Lu were shot yesterday while campaigning for this weekend's presidential election, but their injuries were not life-threatening, a senior official said.

Nobody has claimed responsibility for the shooting which comes at the end of a bitter and divisive campaign fought over the island's relations with mainland China. It was unclear how the incident would affect the poll on Saturday.

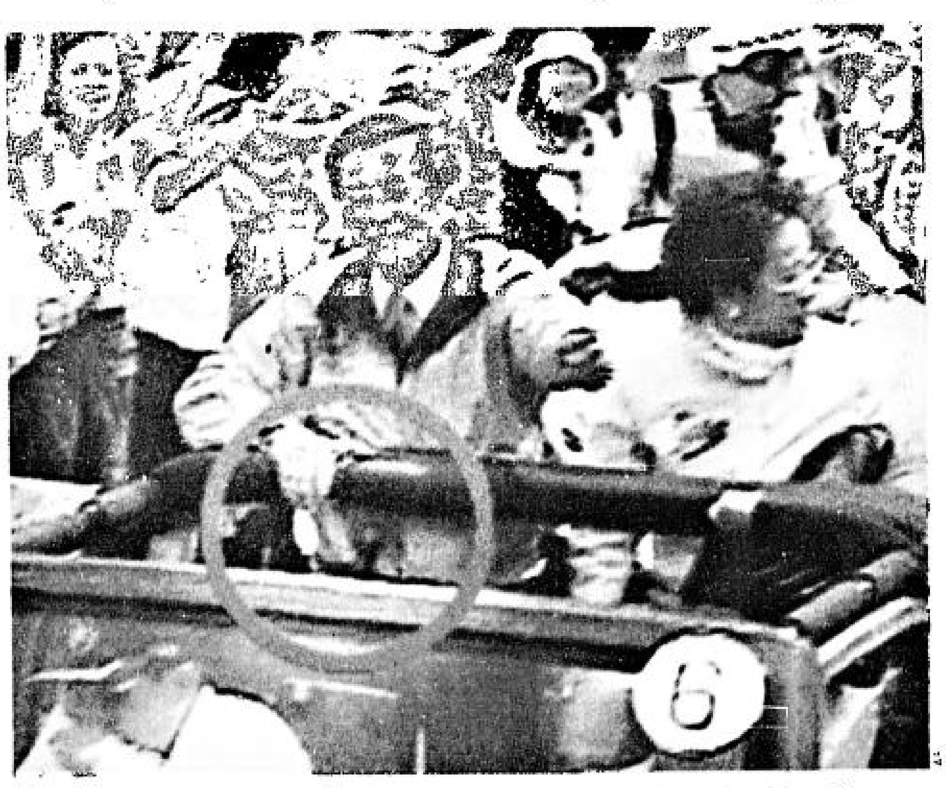
Chen, 53, and Lu, 59, are both outspoken supporters of Taiwanese independence, a stance which has seen them vilified by the Chinese government which claims the island as part of its territory.

Chiou I-jen, secretary general in the Presidential Office, said the president was shot in the stomach and the vice president was hit in the right knee while their motorcade was cruising the streets in the southern city of Tainan in campaigning for Saturday's presidential vote.

The pair were rushed to the Chi Mei hospital in the town 300 km south of Taipei but their lives were not in danger and the elections were scheduled to go ahead as planned, Chiou told reporters in Taipei.

"They did not suffer life-threatening injuries. They urge the public to cool down," Chiou said at a news conference.

TAIWAN/ A17



ELECTION violence in Taiwan: A video image shows where the bullet hit President Chen Shui-bian while on the campaign trail for the presidential election today. Beside him is his running mate Annette Lu who was wounded in the knee.

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Samar provinces will experience stormy weather and the coastal waters will be rough to very rough. Bicol region, Cebu, Bohol, the rest of eastern Visayas including Biliran Island and Surigao del Norte including Dinagat Island will have rains and gusty winds.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/03/20/04

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONT PAGE

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Stormy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Double pay for workers on April 9

BAGUIO CITY—Workers will see double when they get their pay checks in April.

That's because the Supreme Court upheld a previous Department of Labor and Employment order entitling them to receive 200 percent of their daily basic wage on April 9, a double holiday. Holy Friday and Araw ng Kagitingan happen to fall on the same day.

The high court cited an earlier case when the DOLE directed Asian Transmission Corp. (ATC) to pay its workers a holiday pay of 200 percent of their salary for April 9, 1998. Araw ng Kagitingan and Maunday Thursday were marked on that same day.

The workers cited a DOLE bulletin of March 11, 1993 saying that when two legal holidays fall on the same day, they are entitled to 200 percent of their daily wage as holiday pay even if they did not report for work. But the ATC said that since two holidays fall on one day, it would be absurd to pay them for two holidays.

The SC, however, ruled that Executive Order No. 203, issued on June 30, 1987, named 10 official legal holidays.

"Since a worker is entitled to enjoy 10 paid regular holidays, the fact that two holidays fall on the same date should not operate to reduce to nine the 10 holiday pay benefits a worker is entitled to receive," the court said. *Delmar Cariño, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

GMA still counting on Danding

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

VICTORIAS CITY, Negros Occidental—President Macapagal-Arroyo is still counting on the support of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco for her presidential bid in the May elections but 'The Boss' has played coy about his choice.

"I would like to expect support from everybody possible. That is what a candidate is all about. You try to get as much support as you can," the President said when asked in a press conference here if she was expecting Cojuangco's support.

The support of Cojuangco, chair and CEO of San Miguel Corp. and founder of the Nationalist People's Coalition, the country's second largest political party, is being wooed by both the President and the opposition.

The businessman is known to be close to opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., who has been the major product endorser of SMC's flagship brand, San Miguel Pale Pilsen.

Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., president of the ruling party Lakas-CMD, said Cojuangco has given the NPC a free hand to support the party's chosen candidate.

"We have an ongoing coalition with the NPC which started in 1992 and in 2001 under the leadership of Ambassador Cojuangco and that coalition is strong and ongoing," said De Venecia who was part of the President's entourage here.

He said "more than 70 percent" of NPC leaders have declared support for Ms Macapagal.

He admitted, however, that the President and her camp do not expect Cojuangco to make an open declaration of his personal support for her.

"Because he is a businessman. He is chair of a major public stock company and we understand that. Anyway, we already know that all his top leaders are backing the President," De Venecia said.

De Venecia said he does not believe that Cojuangco would support Poe.

"We do not believe that will happen because almost all of his major leaders have declared support for Gloria," he said.

Michael Defensor, the President's campaign spokesperson, earlier said that Cojuangco's sons Mark and Charlie , who represent Pangasinan and Negros Occidental, respectively, in Congress, have declared support for Ms Macapagal. He said that was indicative of Cojuangco's support.

But Bacolod City Rep. Monico Puentevella said the elder Cojuangco was not expected to appear in the President's campaign swing in Negros, where the businessman has a hacienda in Pontevedra.

"I think he's out of the country," Puentevella said, adding that the last time he heard Cojuangco on radio, he said that he was for Ms Macapagal.

Puentevella, a Lakas reelectionist, said Bacolod was "GMA country" and that she would win here by a wide margin over Poe.

Puentevella said Ms Macapagal was an adopted daughter of Negros because her husband, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and his family hail from here.

The First Gentleman's controversial brother Iggy, who claimed to be the Jose Pidal exposed by opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson, is running for the congressional seat in the fifth district of Negros Occidental.

Puentevella said Poe would not be able to get many votes because out of 31 cities and municipalities in Negros, he has only one local candidate, a mayoralty bet in Bacolod City.

Meanwhile, the President signed into law yesterday the "act strengthening the regulatory capacity of the Department of Health in quarantine and international health surveillance." The law repeals the antiquated quarantine law of 1947.

She was joined in the signing by the bill's authors—Puentevella, Senate President Franklin Drilon, De Venecia and Sen. Noli de Castro.

Poe presidency to review RP-US relations, says spokesman

By Carlito Pablo

GIVEN a choice between fighting terrorism and respect for human rights, a Poe presidency will "tilt the balance" and favor the latter.

This is according to Rep. Francis Escudero (Sorsogon), campaign spokesperson for presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., saying that a restudy of the country's foreign policy from the perceived pro-United States bent of President Macapagal-Arroyo would be expected if Fernando Poe Jr. is elected president.

Escudero said this includes a review of the country's alliance with the US in the Washington-led continuing war against international terrorism.

However, he stressed that a restudy or review will not result in a complete turnaround in the country's commitment to fight terrorism, but will give priority to human rights. "Nobody likes terrorism and any government will have to fight terrorists," Escudero added.

A Poe presidency will also review the government's current level of support for the US-led occupation of Iraq."We are also faced with an internal terrorist threat, and unless we can end this problem, how can we even aspire to send our troops abroad," the congressman said.

At least 100 peace keepers have been sent to Iraq because of continued attacks by Iraqi resistance groups against American and other allied forces.

Escudero also said that there may be a departure from the over-reliance of Manila on unilateral actions by the US, particularly its invasion of Iraq, without a mandate from the United Nations. A Poe presidency will rely on "multilateral partners like the Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and the UN," he said.

Poe's foreign policy direction closely hews to the views of Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr., who has come out to back the actor. Before he declared support for Poe last March 13, Guingona told reporters that "because of the Constitution, the Philippines should maintain an independent foreign policy friendly to other countries."

AFP to NPA: No ceasefire

By Alcuin Papa

THE MILITARY yesterday ruled out a ceasefire with the communist New People's Army ahead of the peace talks and the May elections.

"The armed forces maintains a position that the non-declaration of SOMO (suspension of offensive military operations) is most favorable to national security objectives and best supports the effort toward securing a free, peaceful, clean and honest election," military spokesman Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero said.

Lucero said that based on past experiences, a SOMO has not prevented NPA rebels from employing violence and coercion and desisting from terrorism.

"The AFP believes that the unhampered and aggressive military operations against the NPA will reduce if not prevent the NPAs from exacting financial resources from the candidates, prevent the NPAs from coercing the populace and prevent the NPAs from pursuing terrorism against the people," Lucero told reporters yesterday. *With AFP report*

Storm Butchoy leaves 3,500 stranded in Bicol

By Volt Contreras

TROPICAL storm Butchoy will continue to affect the Samar and Bicol provinces today and is expected to move in a northwest direction over the eastern parts of Luzon until Monday, the weather bureau said.

Storm Signal No. 2 remained in effect over Catanduanes and the Samar provinces as of last night, while Signal No. 1 covered Sorsogon, Albay including Burias Island, Masbate, the Camarines and Leyte provinces, Bohol, Northern Cebu, and Surigao del Norte.

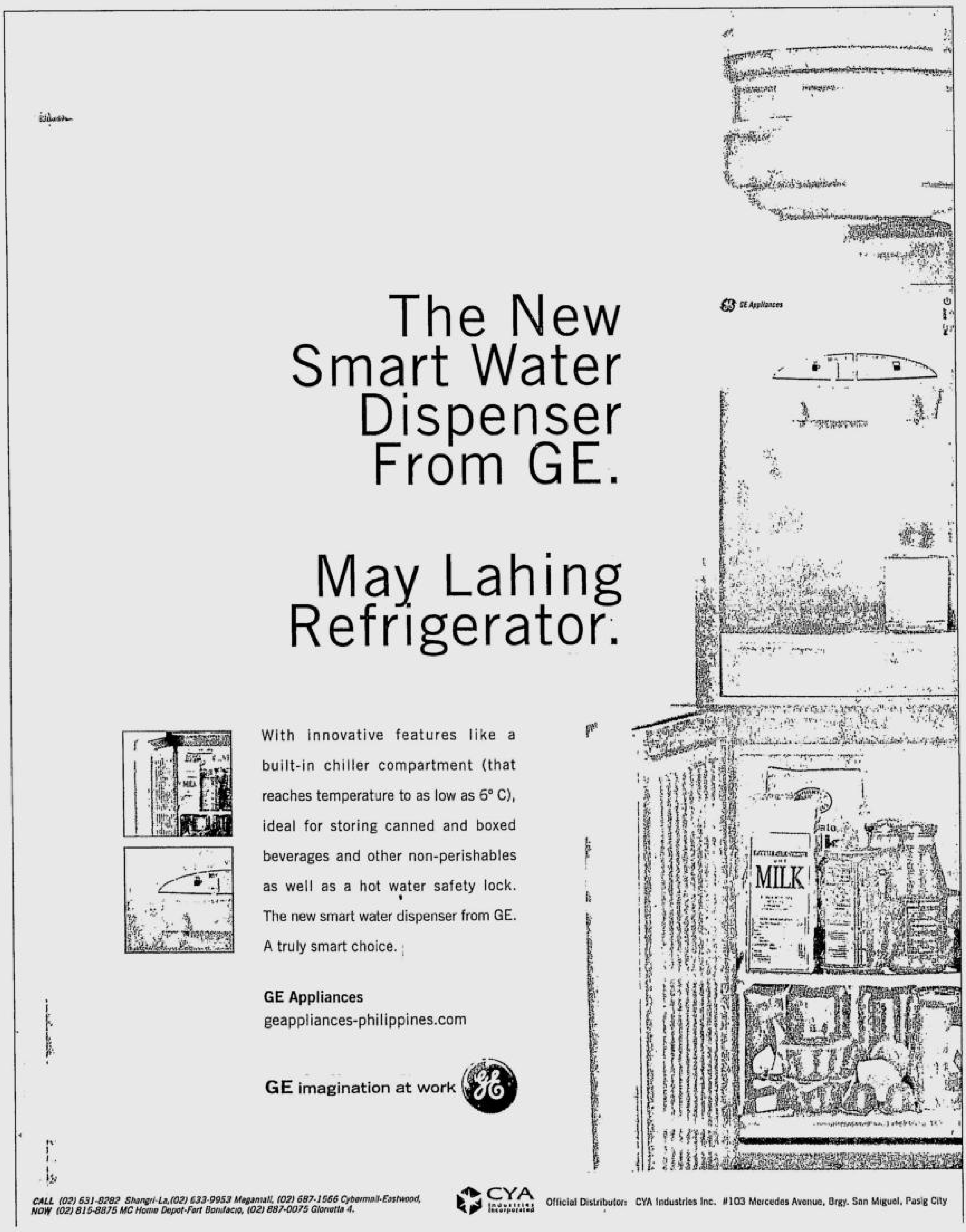
Yesterday, the three main ports in Bicol—Matnog and Pilar in Sorsogon, as well as Tabaco in Albay—were temporarily closed because of storm Butchoy. At least 3,000 passengers were stranded, Office of Civil Defense Regional Director Arnel Capili told the INQUIRER.

"In Matnog alone, there were 2,400 passengers including 56 buses and 50 trucks that were stranded, while in Pilar, 580, and Tabaco, 511," Capili said.

Butchoy has been dumping heavy rains since Thursday mostly on provinces along the eastern side of the archipelago.

As of 4 p.m. yesterday, Butchoy's center was spotted 240 kms east southeast of Guiuan, Eastern Samar, with strongest sustained winds of up 85 kph near the center and gustiness of up to 100 kph.

Heading northwest at 17 kph, typhoon Butchoy is expected to be over Northern Samar this afternoon, at 130 km southeast of Casiguran, Aurora, by Sunday afternoon, and in the vicinity of Aparri, Cagayan by Monday. *With a report from Gil Francis Arevalo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*



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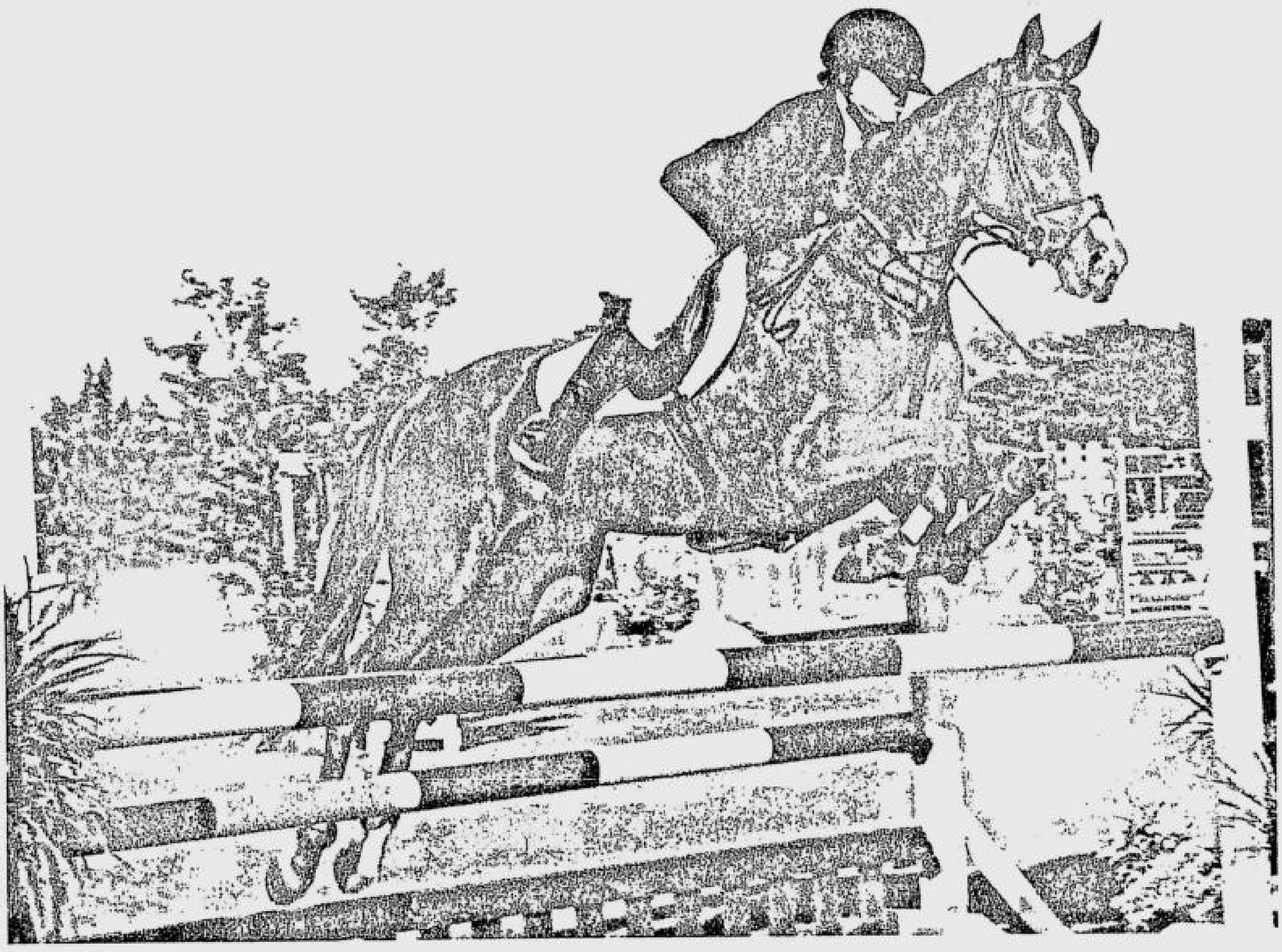

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NAKTF SCORES ANEW

No. 6 in most wanted list falls

By Alcuin Papa and Christian Esguerra

POLICE yesterday arrested the country's sixth most-wanted kidnap suspect, bringing to 13 the total number of suspects arrested since the government launched an all-out war against kidnapping.

Feliciano Laygo, who had a half-a-million peso bounty on his head, was arrested by operatives of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktf), the Philippine National Police (PNP) Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) and the San Pablo City police.

Laygo surrendered to authorities who stormed his safe house in Barangay Lagalag, Tiaong, Quezon at around 2:45 a.m. He yielded a 45-caliber Thompson sub-machine gun.

Laygo's face and name appears in the new list of most wanted kidnappers released by the Naktf early this year. His addresses are listed as Lipa, Batangas and Tiaong, Quezon.

Naktf operatives received information that Laygo is staying at his family's residence in Tiaong, Quezon. His arrest is a result of a month-long intelligence operations.

Laygo is the suspected leader of the Laygo Kidnap-for-Ransom Group who kidnapped Sonny Tan of San Juan, Batangas in August 1999. Laygo was initially arrested on Aug. 5, 1999. He escaped with five other inmates from the Quezon City jail on Feb. 11, 2003.

Police said he was also involved in the kidnappings of Mason Ang in April 3, 2003, Petronila Lanting in April 30, 2003, Danilo Tiu in May 23, 2003 and Rubilyn Chua in August 23, 2003.

Laygo is now under detention at the CIDG and is undergoing initial investigation prior to his transfer to the custody of the Naktf.

Laygo was one of 10 suspects who each has a P500,000 price tag. The rest were Jaime Moog, Neil Cutad, Felizardo Pagulayan, Ronald Roilan, Joel Bunales, Mario Valerio, Pecasiano Tagle, Sergio and More Panday.

Harold Fajardo and his older brother Rolando, leaders of the dreaded Fajardo gang, and former policeman Allan Estrada top the list. Each has a P1-million price tag. *With a report from AFP*

Abu Sayyaf man in Schilling kidnapping arrested in Zambo

POLICE said yesterday they have arrested a Muslim guerrilla who confessed to kidnapping an American in Sulu province four years ago.

National police chief Hermogenes Ebdane said Alkis Asari Alih, 28, also known as Abu Jarin, was arrested last Saturday in Zamboanga City.

During initial interrogation, Alih, a member of the Muslim extremist group Abu Sayyaf, confessed to participating in the abduction of Jeffrey Schilling, a Muslim convert seized in August 2000 after traveling to an Abu Sayyaf camp on Jolo Island, Ebdane said.

Schilling, of Oakland, California, escaped after almost eight months in captivity. His abduction initially set off doubts whether he was a hostage because he voluntarily traveled to the camp with his Filipina girlfriend. But Schilling later testified that Abu Sabaya, one of the group's leaders, had refused to let him go on suspicion that he worked for the CIA.

The al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf is notorious for kidnapping and beheading hostages. About a month after Schilling's escape, the guerrillas seized three Americans, including missionaries Martin and Gracia Burnham. Two of those captured, including Martin Burnham, died during a yearlong ordeal.

Ebdane said Alih also confessed to having been one of the Burnhams' guards.

The kidnapping spree prompted the United States to send troops and military instructors to help Filipino troops dislodge the rebels from their traditional lair on Basilan Island, near Jolo.

The government says the Abu Sayyaf is now a spent force, down from about 1,000 members four years ago to about 300 guerrillas on Jolo.

But authorities said they were investigating a claim by the Abu Sayyaf that it put a suicide bomber on board a ferry that caught fire on Feb. 27 in Manila Bay, killing more than 100 people.

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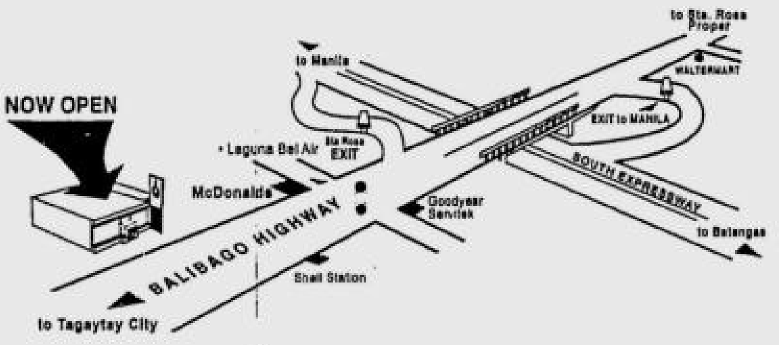

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RP says OIC observer status will help peace

THE PHILIPPINES has repeated its call for observer status in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), saying this would help it find peace with Muslim separatists, the foreign ministry said yesterday.

Foreign Secretary Delia Albert made the call in a meeting this week with Abdulouahed Belkeziz, secretary general of the influential 57-member organization, the ministry said in a statement.

"Secretary Albert said that peace and development efforts will come into full realization if the Philippines is in a better position to effectively represent the Muslim Filipinos in all parts of the country.

"The Philippines can do this... if it becomes an observer in the OIC," the statement said.

Belkeziz was quoted as assuring Albert that the Philippines' application would be considered.

He also suggested that an OIC representative be invited to the next round of peace talks next month between the government and the Muslim separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

At the meeting, Albert referred to the OIC's role in bringing about peace talks between the Philippine government and Muslim rebels who have been fighting to set up a separate Islamic state in the southern third of the Philippines.

Turkey's invitation for the Philippines to attend the next Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, to be held in Istanbul in June, is hopefully another sign of progress in the Philippines' effort to win observer status in the OIC, the ministry said.

The June conference is likely to take up applications of various countries for observer status in the OIC.

An advance party of Malaysian ceasefire monitors is to fly to the Philippines on Monday, ahead of a larger foreign mission, in preparation for the next round of peace talks between Manila and the MILF to be held in Kuala Lumpur in April. AFP

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, March 20, 2004
3rd Week of Lent

1st Reading: Hos 6:1-6
Gospel: Lk 18:9-14

Jesus told another parable to some persons fully convinced of their own righteousness, who looked down on others, "Two men went up to the Temple to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and said: 'I thank you, God, that I am not like other people, grasping, crooked, adulterous, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give the tenth of all my income to the Temple.'

"In the meantime the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying: 'O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.'

"I tell you, when this man went down to his house, he had been set right with God, but not the other. For whoever makes himself out to be great will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be raised."

Commentary

The Pharisee "stood by himself": that was the very definition of Pharisee. Perhaps for that reason his prayer was all about himself: I, I, I. When there is emphasis on the separate self, life becomes competition: the "I" has to win every race and be 'better' than others. That means that it can never afford to relax and be off-guard. How difficult life becomes! It is hardly a life at all, and it certainly is not life-giving to others.

The other spoke directly to God, asking for mercy. There could hardly be a more essential prayer. He did not think of himself as complete, needing nothing. A circle is complete: it marks out a small space and it divides it off; it needs nothing from the outside. The Pharisee was such a circle: he didn't come out of himself to God—nor of course to the tax-collector. But the tax-collector knew his own incompleteness. He was like a circle with a breach in the circumference. We are at our best when we are open: when we know our need of God and one another. Then something can flow in and out. Through our woundedness the mercy of God can flow through the world.

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Pipie's killer charged with murder in NY

NEW YORK—An unlicensed plastic surgeon who fled the United States for Costa Rica before a body was discovered at his former home in New Jersey was charged with second-degree murder in an arrest warrant filed Thursday.

Dean Faiello, who is awaiting extradition, was charged by Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau in the death of Maria "Pipie" Cruz, who had been undergoing laser treatments at Faiello's Manhattan apartment for a growth on her tongue.

Cruz's remains were discovered on Feb. 18 in a slab floor at Faiello's former home in Newark.

Faiello had been arrested in 2002 for practicing without a license and illegally possessing medical drugs, but he apparently continued to see patients.

Morgenthau said Faiello was treating Cruz, who grew up in the Philippines, in April 2003 when she had a reaction to anesthesia and began having convulsions.

Faiello called a friend who was a medical doctor, and the doctor told him to call an ambulance, Morgenthau said.

Faiello called another friend and told him that Cruz had no vital signs. The friend offered to call emergency services, but Faiello told him not to, the district attorney said.

Faiello later told the friend he had taken Cruz to St. Vincent's Hospital, but neither St. Vincent's nor any other nearby hospital had a record for Cruz or anyone who fit her description, Morgenthau said.

Cruz's family never heard from her after April 13, 2003.

Faiello, who was apprehended in Costa Rica on Feb. 26, is charged with murder with depraved indifference to human life. If convicted, he faces up to 25 years to life in prison. *AP*

Another murder in US: Pinoy in custody fight

HOPEWELL BOROUGH, New Jersey—The father of a woman found beaten to death in January has come from the Philippines to the United States in hopes of gaining custody of her three children.

Prosecutors allege that Michelle Nyce's husband killed her by smashing her head on the garage floor of their mansion, then staged a car wreck to make her death look like an accident.

Jonathan Nyce, 54, has pleaded innocent to a first-degree murder charge.

Michelle Nyce's father, Teodoro Rivera, traveled more than 13,500 kilometers from the Philippines.

"My purpose is to give justice for Michelle and care for her children," Rivera told The Times of Trenton for Thursday's editions.

Since their father's arrest earlier this year, 12-year-old Alexander, 10-year-old Trevor and 5-year-old Samantha have been living in western Pennsylvania with their uncle, Michael Nyce, and his wife.

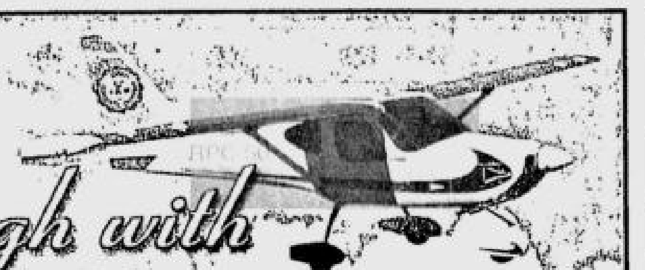
A funeral ceremony for Michelle Nyce had been held in the Philippines.

Rivera also has filed a civil suit to freeze the assets of Jonathan and Michelle Nyce so that money can't be used to pay for Jonathan Nyce's criminal defense costs.

Rivera had lived with his daughter and her family for nearly two years prior to her death.

The Times of Trenton reported that papers filed in family court by attorneys for Michael Nyce said the children barely know their mother's family and have never been to the Philippines.

However, Rivera disagreed, telling the newspaper that his daughter had wanted the children to visit the Philippines but that her husband had refused. *AP*



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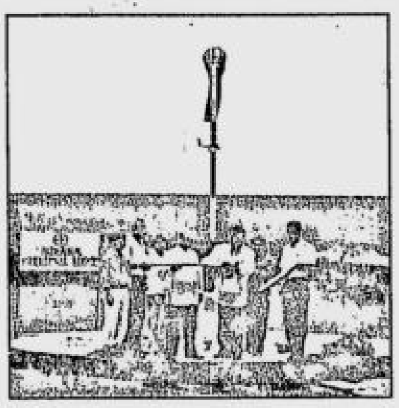

To decongest Metro Manila, former MMDA Chairman now COMELEC Chairman Benjamin S. Abalos Sr. assisted by Dr. Jovenal B. Toring, IAU President inaugurated the 6-Hectare IAU Educational Mini-Airport. The project is IAU's trust to provide quality education. This US Federal Aviation approved project is very useful to foreign and local students studying BS in Flying, BS in Aerospace Engineering, BS in Airline Mgt., BS in Aircraft Maintenance Tech. and BS in Criminology, major in Aviation and Airport Security. The IAU Mgt., also allows other Metro Manila Schools to use the said Mini-Airport for educational purposes in order to encourage other schools to transfer outside Metro Manila in line with the school's dispersal program of Pres. Arroyo as one way of building a strong Republic.

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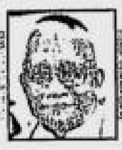

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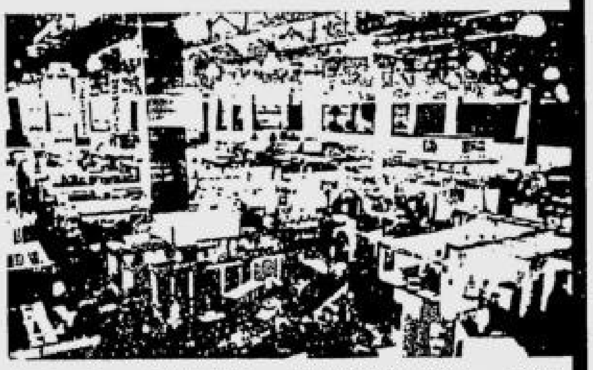

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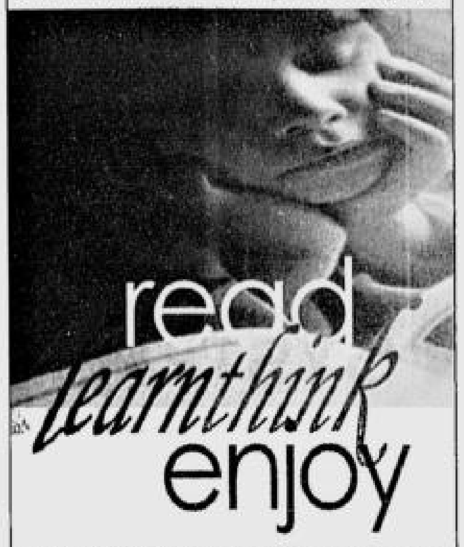

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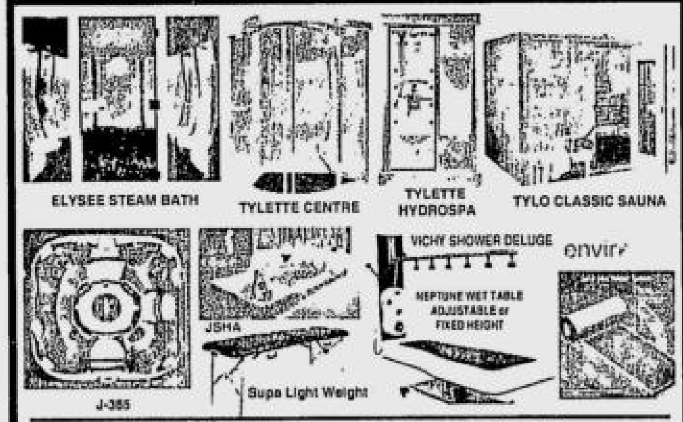

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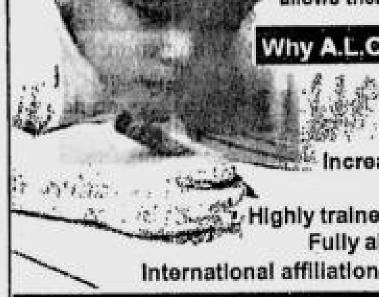

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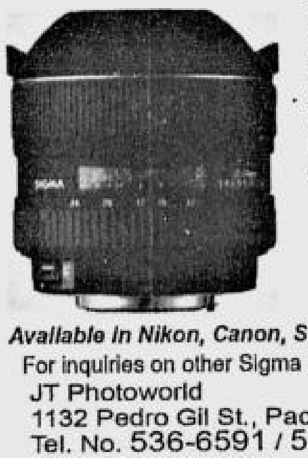

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Coast Guard divers recover 4 more bodies from vessel

By Leila B. Salaverria

FOUR more bodies were recovered yesterday from the half-submerged SuperFerry 14, where operatives are working to remove the debris from the last remaining portion of the ship's A-deck.

Philippine Coast Guard Commodore Wilfredo Tamayo said they did not finish retrieval operations because they were hampered by the small opening and difficult-to-reach location of the lavatory which is underwater.

The lavatory is the last remaining part of the ship still covered with debris three weeks after the ship was towed to Bataan after it caught fire on Feb. 27.

Tamayo said six to seven bodies were spotted in the lavatory yesterday, but only four were retrieved. Two were male, one was female, while the gender of the fourth body is still undetermined.

The bodies will be turned over to the National Bureau of Investigation for forensic examination. The exact death toll from the SuperFerry 14 fire has not been determined because the NBI continues to conduct DNA testing on recovered body parts.

After the removal of debris, Tamayo said "mopping up operations" would be conducted. This is when the whole ship is again searched in case there are any more bodies or body parts still left.

PCG spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo said the mopping up operations and the removal of debris are conditions that must be met before the PCG could recommend the halt of retrieval operations.

Meanwhile, an arson and an explosive expert testified before the Special Board of Marine Inquiry yesterday that they did not see physical signs of explosion aboard the ship when they visited it.

"As of this time I haven't seen physical proof that will lead to an explosion," said Major Fennimore Jaudian, chief of the Inter-Agency Anti-Arson Task Force.

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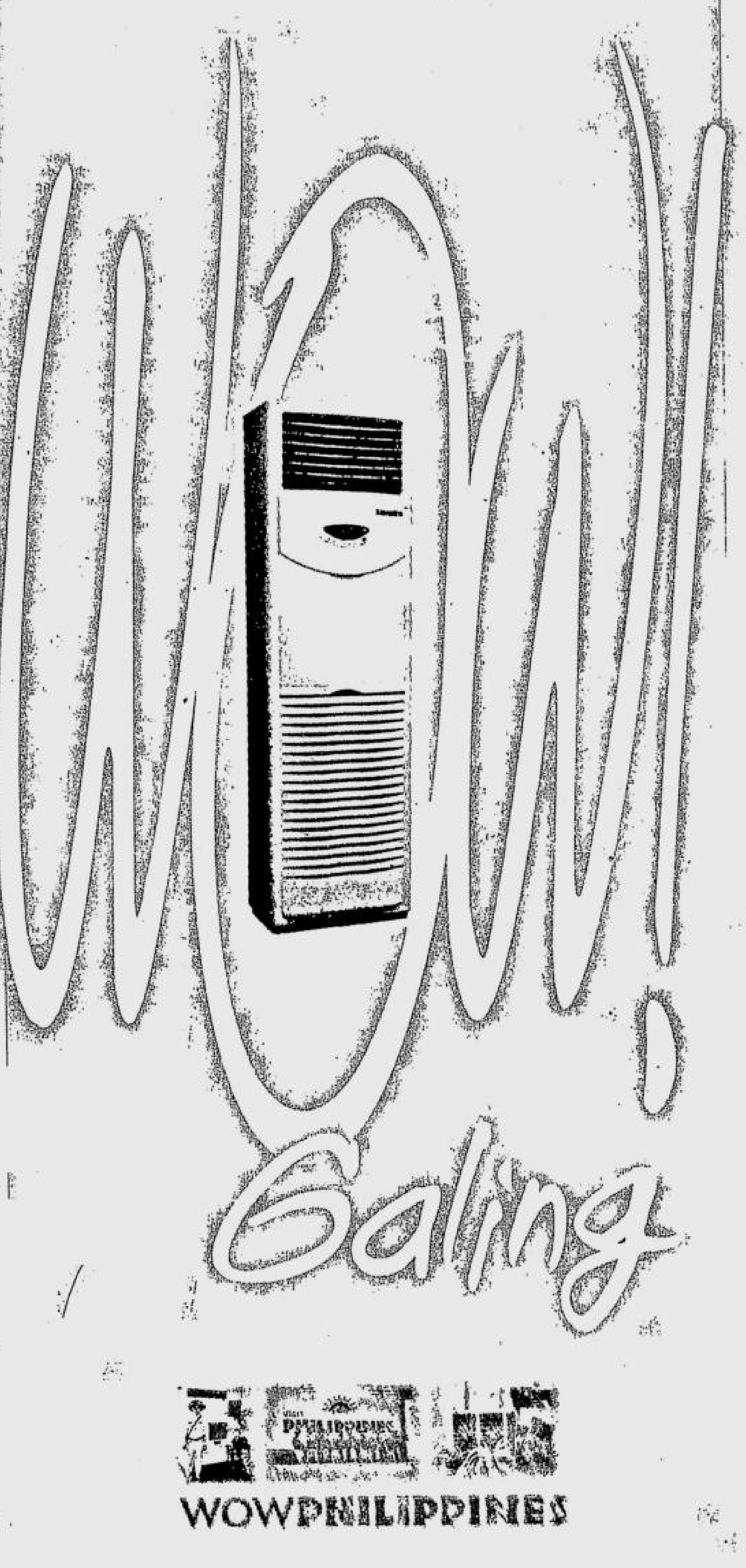

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PRESIDENT Macapagal and Senator De Castro: "It's a step backward."

Maynilad gov't 'bailout' hit

From page A1

ernment bailout of the Lopez family.

"This is a matter of public interest and there's no politics behind the pullout of the Lopezes from Maynilad," said presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

"The new set-up is only aimed at ensuring that Maynilad's services will not be affected, and facilitating the improvement of water service in Metro Manila. The administration is determined to ensure clean water for every barangay," Bunye said.

"The immediate result of this is that operations [of the utility] will continue, in providing service and water. The important thing here is that there will be no halt in providing service," Bunye said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo referred to the statement released by Bunye when asked about the issue in Victorias, Negros Occidental, yesterday. But she left De Castro to answer the question on the Maynilad deal.

De Castro feigned surprise, letting his elbows drop when the question was thrown at him. He tried to evade answering it by adopting the President's line that a spokesperson would make the response.

"I'm not familiar with the deal about Maynilad. I cannot comment on it because I don't know the inside story," he said.

Asked if there was a political deal, he said in a mixture of English and Filipino: "Oh no, no. Definitely none. That has nothing to do with it. They [the Lopezes] are going to lose [control of] the company, so where's the deal there?"

Reorganization plan

Under the reorganization plan, Maynilad's domestic creditors led by the Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. (Metrobank) agreed in principle to convert P3 billion of debt to shares in Maynilad.

Benpres, which held 60 percent of Maynilad, agreed to write off almost P6 billion, leaving the operations of the utility in the hands of the MWSS, the Suez Group, Metrobank and Maynilad employees.

Justice Undersecretary Manuel Teehankee, who led the panel that advised the MWSS in the negotiations, explained yesterday that all the stakeholders in the Maynilad concession, including the state-run MWSS, had "decided to share the pain" so as not to disrupt water services.

He said Benpres would be giving up compensation for investments worth P303 million that it made in Maynilad.

"This is part of the new agreement now and it supersedes what is stated in the concession agreement that the company gets compensated for its capital investments made in the last five years," Teehankee said.

Under the plan, the MWSS will hold a 61-percent stake, the Suez group 30 percent, Metrobank 3 percent and Maynilad employees, 6 percent.

Management remains

However, Maynilad management will remain in place while MWSS through the Development Bank of the Philippines as trustee will be represented with four board seats. The bank creditors will receive two board seats. Suez will be entitled to one board seat.

Maynilad decided in late 2002 to terminate early its 25-year concession agreement with the government after failing to win approval for rate increases, the proceeds of which was intended to repay its loans.

It claimed that the government failed to comply with the terms of the concession agreement.

Benpres and its French partner won the concession for water and sewerage in 1997 when the state water utility was privatized. Manila Water, headed by the Ayala Group, won the concession for the other half of Metro Manila.

Unpaid concession fee

Last year, Maynilad was ordered by a Paris-based arbitration panel to pay the government overdue concession fees of about P8 billion. The company then petitioned a local court for debt relief and corporate rehabilitation.

Benpres Holdings chief operating officer Angel Ong said yesterday that Benpres and MWSS would have to withdraw all legal cases against each other once the plan is approved by the court and Maynilad's creditor banks.

People's organizations grouped under the Water for the People Network said the government and the consumers stood to lose much in the Maynilad deal.

Water for the People includes Ibon Databank, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, Confederation for the Advancement and Recognition of Government Employees, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, among others.

Another effect of the deal is that consumers may never recover the P6.4 billion that Maynilad allegedly illegally collected from them through the foreign currency differential adjustment (FCDA) and accelerated extraordinary price adjustment (AEPA), Padilla said.

Partly solves financial woes

Industry analysts said Benpres' write-off of its investments in Maynilad would affect the Lopez Group's flagship company's earnings in 2003.

The company said, however, the write-off would not affect its financial performance as it made provisions to charge the investment against retained earnings in previous years.

Industry sources said the company will book its investments in Maynilad as expenses starting in 2003.

According to a Kim-Eng Securities analyst, Benpres' move to divest from Maynilad was "a way forward."

"The Lopez Group knew they can no longer put new investments in the company because their other companies are also in a restructuring mode so getting off from Maynilad actually partly solves their financial problems," the analyst said.

Benpres has been suffering losses since 2000, reporting a net loss of P420 million that year, P9.93 billion in 2001 after provisioning for loss of equity in Bayan Telecommunications Inc. and P1.06 billion in 2002. It has yet to report its 2003 financial results.

Debt restructuring

The plan also calls for a partial withdrawal of $50 million on Maynilad's $120 million performance bond and the restructuring of all its debt.

Ong said said the write-off of P6 billion in equity and receivables, and conversion of P8 billion to equity would provide a big relief to Maynilad whose debts stand at around P16 billion to P18 billion.

The rest of the estimated P4 billion will be restructured, the sources said.

Ong also said the main beneficiary of the settlement were the consumers who stood to lose if the legal cases continued.

Be nice to foreign maids . . .

From page A1

Eng Hen said yesterday.

At present, many of the maids have written contracts drawn up with the aid of employment agents and the maids' embassies, but these usually list only their days off.

There are more than 140,000 foreign maids in Singapore, mostly from impoverished villages in the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

Employment contracts

"Moving ahead, the ministry aims to have all FDWs (foreign domestic workers) and their employers enter into employment contracts," Ng told Parliament during a budget debate.

"We will be considering how to ensure that employment contracts clearly define areas like the scope of duties, hours of work and rest days, so that the basic welfare of FDWs is addressed and outlined up front," he said.

Ng's announcement is the latest in a series of steps taken to improve the lives of FDWs, most of whom, a survey by the Straits Times newspaper found last year, work 15-16 hours a day for about S$260 (US$156) a month, providing vital income for their families back home.

From April onward, first-time employers will have to undergo half-day orientation programs before they can employ maids, Ng said.

"The orientation program will not only educate potential employers about good employment practices but also highlight to employers the consequences they face if they are found guilty of abusing or endangering their FDWs," Ng said. "The many measures we have put in place will improve the safety and well-being of FDWs."

A similar course for maids will include briefings on how to recognize exploitative work, and whom to call for help.

Cheap, compliant

Often regarded as an inexhaustible underclass who are cheap and compliant, Singapore's 140,000 FDWs make the affluent city-state one of the world's top employers of maids.

One in seven families hires live-in maids.

None is guaranteed a minimum salary or automatically entitled to a day off a week. Many are expected to be available at any hour. On the whim of an employer, they can be sent back to their countries without right of appeal.

Under Singapore law, errant employers found guilty of abusing their maids will be barred from hiring them again.

Employers who have physically abused FDWs and in one case caused the death of a maid have been jailed in recent years.

Fil-Am girls advance in American Idol derby

From page A1

terview after the "performance night" of the show on Wednesday at the Fox Studios.

Jasmine and Camile landed in the top 12 after competing in a field of 32 semi-finalists in February and March.

"Jasmine is so happy," said Trias, adding that his daughter was relishing the life of a celebrity in Hollywood.

Hollywood treatment

"She loves the complete Hollywood treatment—riding limos, the spotlight, the bodyguards!" he added.

The elder Trias also lives in the Hollywood mansion where the 12 finalists are billeted for the duration of the contest as Jasmine is still a minor.

Trias, who watched the show with Jasmine's cousin, Junior, said his daughter has yet to visit the Philippines.

"One of these days, she will come and visit, but right now everything that she knows of the Philippines she just gets from the TFC channel," he said.

Unlike Camile Velasco who was born in the Philippines, Jasmine was born in Honolulu. She is the eldest of three children. Trias is from Tanza, Cavite. His wife Nora (nee Sonicio) is from Mandaluyong.

Jasmine is a senior at the Maryknoll High School in Oahu, and reportedly idolizes Whitney Houston, Celine Dion, Aretha Franklin, Mariah Carey, Christina Aguilera and Alicia Keyes.

Jasmine, who is easy to spot among the contestants because she always wears a flower behind her right ear, has earned unqualified praise from music critics.

She topped a current AOL survey on "Who should win the 'American Idol' contest?" with 24 votes.

Rave reviews

Music critic Mike Bell of Calgary-Sun.com wrote: "Jasmine is the dark horse. Beautiful and with a voice that's only going to get better."

Another critic, David Bloomberg of "Foxes on Idol & More," an internet message board dedicated to the show, said the diminutive Jasmine "gave us some great, powerful vocals and she showed a lot of her ability to control her voice."

Raul de Guzman, 24, who is from Hawaii, said he was supporting both Filipino-American girls.

"I am so proud of them both and I hope they stay long in the competition," he said.

His girlfriend Marina Cruz who watched the show with him wore a flower on her short hair. Many Jasmine supporters in the audience wore flowers on their hair as a tribute to her.

Camille nervous

By contrast, both judges and critics seemed to agree on Camile Velasco's nervousness and apparent lack of confidence as a performer.

Camile, dressed in a red blouse, did appear to be a little nervous on Tuesday, particularly while she and another contestant, Jennifer Hudson, were waiting for the results of the vote. The two were among the last to learn whether they were voted in or out of the competition.

Camile, who sang "Son of a Preacher Man," on Tuesday, kept twitching her mouth and holding on to Hudson before the announcement. She appeared to be disbelieving when host Ryan Seacrest announced that she was in.

Phil Kural of "Foxes on Idol," another internet message board, said that while Camile has an "amazing" voice, "she is scared to let it out."

Kural wrote: "She is easily intimidated by the stage and the crowd, not to mention the judges, and showed them that she isn't performing to her potential. I don't think she'll be eliminated this week, but if she doesn't get over that stage fright, it will sneak up on her in the coming weeks."

Judge Paula Abdul told Velasco after her Tuesday night performance: "We loved your voice in Hawaii. Your voice reminded us of Lauryn Hill. You seemed nervous and you sounded like you were not having fun. You looked scared."

Petrified

To which judge Simon Cowell said: "Scared? She is petrified! You are lacking in self-belief. You have to believe in yourself."

Judge Randy Jackson commented that Velasco's was "a safe performance."

Jasmine, who sang "Inseparable" on Tuesday night, drew an unabashed compliment from the usually acerbic Cowell. He described her performance as "Superb!"

Jackson commented: "At 17, you can really sing. This [Jasmine's performance] is what this competition is about."

Abdul said Jasmine's was her "favorite performance."

"You have a mature, well-rounded voice and it blends well with the beautiful spirit that you are," she told Jasmine.

Fox Television publicists have kept the 12 finalists from the media in keeping with the network's policy that contestants will not be interviewed until they are booted out of the competition.

Peso plunges to all-time low: 56.38 to a dollar

From page A1

against the peso, driving the latter to a fresh record low.

Taiwan's currency was hurt by the possibility a sympathy vote may help the President retain the presidency in the face of a strong challenge from the opposition Nationalist Party.

The Taiwan dollar hit a low of 33.29 per dollar, a 0.2-percent drop, after the news broke.

Nervous chord

The peso has been edging lower in recent months due to political concerns ahead of the May 10 presidential election and so the attack on Chen may have struck a nervous chord in the market, traders said.

A trader from a big commercial bank said the peso was likely to slide further now that the local currency had closed at a new low. "The next projected resistance is at 56.50 to the dollar," the trader said.

Aside from seasonally weak inflows during the first quarter, other traders said the bleak outlook on foreign exchange inflows for the rest of this year was likewise not helping the local currency.

BOP deficit

The BSP expects remittances from overseas Filipino workers to slow down due to stiff competition from other labor-exporting developing countries.

But Buenaventura believes foreign exchange inflows, especially from exports, will gain ground later this year.

"Of course, all the political noise is not helping at the moment," Buenaventura said.

The BSP expects the country's balance of payments deficit to reach $660 million this year, a reversal of the $111-million surplus in 2003. It assumes a surplus in the current account of $1.14 billion but a deficit in the capital and financial account of $1.56 billion.

However, the BOP deficit has already reached $822 million in the first two months of the year.

Buenaventura said it was too early to revise its BOP target at this point but the BSP would review what would happen after the first quarter.

Inconsistent data

"Remember that exports were disappointing in the first two months but now the Neda (National Economic and Development Authority) is asking the NSO (National Statistics Office) to check the data because of inconsistency," Buenaventura said.

The BOP measures the total foreign exchange transactions between the Philippines and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account and the capital and financial account.

The current account records trade in goods and services as well as transfers while the capital and financial account records loan transactions, investment flows, short-term capital and other related items.

Any transaction which gives rise to a payment by the Philippine resident like importation or offshore investment is a deficit item while any transaction which gives rise to a receipt like export or inward remittance and investment is a surplus item. *With reports from Reuters, AFP*

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Bin Laden deputy probably cornered

OSAMA bin Laden, left, with his top lieutenant Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahri, in a television image broadcast Oct. 7, 2001. AP

WANA, Pakistan—Pakistani troops resumed an offensive on Friday against a cornered group of militants, possibly including Osama bin Laden's second-in-command, after the expiry of a noon deadline for them to surrender.

"The operation is on," said military spokesperson Maj. Gen. Shaukat Sultan, although he did not refer to the deadline that another officer had earlier said had been set for the group to give up. Sultan declined further comment.

Pakistani troops have faced fierce resistance from suspected al-Qaida militants and tribesmen in the South Waziristan area since launching a sweep on Tuesday, leading to speculation they may be protecting Ayman al-Zawahri, Bin Laden's right-hand man.

A resident in Wana town, near the scene of the battle, said there had been two loud explosions as three helicopters hovered over the area soon after the deadline passed. Small-arms fire could also be heard, he said.

The fighting is centered on an area to the west of Wana that includes the village of Shin Warsak.

Zawahri, an Egyptian doctor, is regarded as the brains of al-Qaida and believed to be one of the key figures behind the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

The capture of one of the world's most wanted men would be a major coup for the United States, under fire over its rationale for the war in Iraq as the first anniversary of the start of that conflict approaches on Saturday.

It would also be a boost to George W. Bush ahead of this year's presidential elections, in which security is a major theme. It would strengthen his campaign to keep allies on side in the war on terror after last week's bloody Madrid train bombings.

An intelligence official said al-Zawahri might be among a group of rebels who tried to flee the Pakistani offensive on Tuesday and who took refuge in Shin Warsak village.

The militants' vehicle had come under fire and there was speculation some of those inside, perhaps al Zawahri, might have been wounded, the official said. *Reuters*

Nato adds troops to Kosovo after ethnic clashes

PRISTINA, Serbia and Montenegro—Nato beefed up its peacekeeping force in Kosovo on Friday after two days of ethnic clashes killed 31 Albanians and Serbs in a major blow to Western efforts to bring stability to the Balkans.

Flying in reserves to bolster its 18,500-strong force, Nato vowed to stamp out the worst violence in Kosovo since the military alliance and the United Nations took control of the province from Serbia in 1999, using "robust" action if necessary.

Around 150 British troops landed in Kosovo early on Friday, a defense ministry spokesperson in London said, the lead party of 750 troops pledged by Britain. About 150 US troops and 80 Italian Carabinieri arrived on Thursday.

UN police spokesperson Derek Chappell voiced cautious optimism that the worst might be over, saying he had no reports of major incidents overnight after clashes between Albanians and peacekeepers near the capital Pristina late Thursday.

"I get the sense things are calming down," he said.

The blackened ruins of the Orthodox church in Pristina were still smoldering hours after it was set on fire, one of several Serbian religious buildings torched by majority Albanians, most of whom are Muslims, in Kosovo on Thursday.

This week's riots, attacks and killings have set back the province's quest for independence from Serbia, UN Security Council members said during an emergency session of the 15-nation body at UN headquarters in New York.

A decision on Kosovo's future "cannot be accomplished through violence," US Deputy Ambassador James Cunningham told the council.

In Kosovo, UN personnel in the ethnically divided town of Mitrovica had been evacuated to a nearby Nato base, a spokesperson said.

At least six people were shot dead or blown up in Mitrovica on Wednesday. The next day, a crowd of Albanians set on fire a church there, despite French soldiers firing teargas and rubber bullets to disperse them.

The flare-up began Monday when a Serb teenager was wounded in a drive-by shooting. The following day three Albanian boys drowned in a river, reportedly after being chased by Serbs. *Reuters*

2nd journalist dies from US fire in Baghdad

BAGHDAD—A second Iraqi journalist for al-Arabiya television died from wounds Friday after being shot by US soldiers late Thursday, a correspondent from the Dubai-based satellite news channel said.

"Ali al-Khatib died 30 minutes ago" in hospital, said Ahmad Salah, an al-Arabiyah correspondent, at around 9:30 a.m.

Khatib was shot in the head, Salah said, his voice choked with tears.

His colleague Ali Abdul Aziz, a cameraman with the same station, was shot dead in the incident, which occurred near the Burj al-Hayat hotel in central Baghdad, the target of a rocket attack Thursday night.

"My brother had asked US forces if they could film the Burj al-Hayat hotel and they told him it was fine. Moments later, a Volvo did not stop at the checkpoint and the soldiers opened fire," said the cameraman's brother Haidar Abdel Aziz.

"My brother and his colleague wanted to leave, they ran to their car and an armored vehicle opened fire on them."

Both Abdul Aziz and Khatib were Iraqi nationals.

A US army spokesperson confirmed that "one Iraqi was shot and killed while trying to run a checkpoint near the Burj al-Hayat hotel" in central Baghdad at 22:16 p.m. on Thursday.

The spokesperson was unable to give the gender of the victim, nor say whether the person had been from the media. He also had no details on whether anyone else had been injured.

Their deaths would be the second and third of journalists at the hands of the US military since May 1 when US President George W. Bush declared major combat over. *AFP*

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Polish president says country 'taken for a ride' by US over WMD

WARSAW—In a first sign of official criticism by a US ally of the invasion of Iraq, Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski Thursday said that his country had been "taken for a ride" about the alleged existence of weapons of mass destruction in the country.

"That they deceived us about the weapons of mass destruction, that's true. We were taken for a ride," Kwasniewski told a group of visiting French journalists.

He argued however that it made no sense to pull US-led coalition troops out of Iraq, which he said was "better" without the presence of ousted president Saddam Hussein.

His comments marked the first time Warsaw, or any other key US ally, has publicly criticized Washington's argument for invading Iraq and for winning support from Poland and other European allies such as Britain and Spain.

Kwasniewski stood by his remarks at a press conference later Thursday, although he appeared to take a softer line, arguing that the United States and the other coalition members had also been misled in the run-up to war.

"According to the information at our disposal, the term 'take for a ride' seems to me appropriate," he told reporters following a meeting of the Polish security council.

"It is also a problem faced by the United States, Britain and other countries. We were told that weapons of mass destruction existed in Iraq, that there was a very high probability of them existing. Today this information has not been confirmed," he added.

Kwasniewski said the misleading information had "come from the actions of the intelligence services.

"In that sense, it was a problem for all of us," he added.

Poland heads up a 9,000-strong multinational force patrolling a swathe of Iraq south of Baghdad.

Warsaw itself has the fourth largest contingent in the coalition, with around 2,500 soldiers.

Kwasniewski's remarks had come days after the prime minister-elect of Spain, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, said Madrid would withdraw its 1,300 soldiers from the Polish-led contingent by June 30, unless the United Nations took over administration of Iraq.

The Polish head of state had questioned the wisdom of pulling foreign troops from the strife-torn country saying such a move could have a counter effect.

"What would be the point of pulling the troops if it meant a return to war, ethnic cleansing and conflict in neighboring countries?" he said.

"If we protest against the United States' dominant role in world politics and we withdraw our troops knowing they will be replaced by US soldiers, what would be the point of such a move?" he asked.

He said he was disappointed by the new Spanish government's threat to withdraw its 1,300 soldiers. *AFP*

CHINESE ARTWORK
A limestone seated Buddha is part of an exhibit at The Smithsonian Institution's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington. America gets its first look at 1,500-year-old treasures of Buddhist sculpture, dug up in northern China with much of the original gilding and coloring intact. The artwork came to light in the leveling of a school athletic field at Qingzhou, southeast of Beijing in 1996. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Spain arrests 5 more

MADRID—Spain arrested five more suspects on Thursday in connection with last week's Madrid train bombings, sources said, while the death toll reached 202 and investigators probed what police believe is an al-Qaida link. The arrests of one Spaniard and four Arabs occurred as three Moroccans and two Indians detained last Saturday began giving evidence in the high court amid tight security. One of the Indians was the first to testify behind closed doors. Police, who suspect last Thursday's attack was the first in Europe by Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida or militants linked to the group, are holding an 11th suspect, an Algerian man. But court sources do not believe he is central to the inquiry. Spanish radio said one of those arrested on Thursday was suspected of a major role in the attack and was also wanted over last May's Casablanca bombings in Morocco that killed 45 people. *Reuters*

WHO warns vs flu

GENEVA—The world is badly prepared for an inevitable human flu pandemic and urgently needs to boost health care, disease surveillance and the supply of key medicines, scientists warned Thursday after a meeting at the UN's health agency. "We know another pandemic is inevitable. It is coming," World Health Organization Director General Jong Wook Lee said as the meeting wound up. "And when this happens we also know that we are unlikely to have enough drugs, vaccines, health care workers and hospital capacity to cope in an ideal way," he added. Scientists urged governments to create an international stockpile of essential but expensive and complex anti-viral drugs and to increase the use of the annual influenza vaccine. They form two of the four key elements in the first line of defense against influenza, along with surveillance and public health measures to slow the spread of the virus. Fears of the emergence of a more deadly and virulent form of human influenza that could kill millions have grown sharply since bird flu jumped the species barrier into humans in Asia again in recent months, killing 23 people, according to WHO data. *AFP*

Peacekeepers in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—International troops in Haiti made their presence felt on Thursday in areas of the country that have been strongholds of rebels behind the revolt that helped oust President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. With security improved in the capital Port-au-Prince, 150 French Marines from a 3,000-member UN-sanctioned force sent to Haiti after Aristide was ousted on Feb. 29 were deployed in the northern city of Cap Haitien, Haiti's second largest city, and had secured the airport, said Lt. Col. Louis Acacio. Acacio, an aide to French Col. Daniel Leplatois, the deputy commander of the international force, said the troops began arriving on Tuesday and might number 300 within days. Acacio said the French troops were patrolling Cap Haitien's streets, where armed rebels are still in control and there is no Haitian police presence. *Reuters*

'Worsened terror threats'

CHICAGO—The invasion of Iraq has polarized the Middle East and may have worsened the threat of terrorism, former United Nations weapons inspector Hans Blix charged on Thursday. On a tour of the United States to promote his book, "Disarming Iraq," Blix criticized US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair for engaging in a "witch hunt" to justify the US-led invasion of Iraq one year ago. In a speech sponsored by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Blix listed the negatives he believes have resulted from the war: polarized societies in the Middle East, a rift in Nato, damage to the UN Security Council, and no easing in the threat of terrorism. "The terrorism threat has not abated," he said. *Reuters*

India tests missile

BHUBANESHWAR, India—India successfully tested a short-range nuclear-capable ballistic missile Friday at an eastern coastal test range, a defense official said. The test of the indigenously built Prithvi (earth) missile that can carry a nuclear warhead took place at the Chandipur-on-Sea test site in the eastern state of Orissa, the official said. "The test took place from a mobile launcher at 10:10 a.m. to fine-tune the accuracy of the missile," added the official. "It is an extended verion being developed for the Indian air force," he said. The Prithvi missile has a range of 150-300 km and can carry conventional and nuclear warheads. A variant of it has already been inducted into the Indian Army. A scientist at the test range said he was "happy with the test results." *AFP*

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Debates

EDITORIAL

AFTER FUMBLING and bungling the first—and only—media interview he has given so far, it is not surprising that opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. is loath to face his rivals for the presidency in a televised debate. In his interview on Maximo Soliven's "Impact," the action star came up with the most pathetic performance of his political life, exposing himself as incapable not only of discussing simple issues but even just comprehending simple questions. Twice during the hour-long interview, Soliven asked Poe what he planned to accomplish during his first 100 days if elected. Twice he mumbled that his plans, which were still being drawn up by his advisers, were for a full six-year term. Twice also he was asked why he was surrounding himself with old *trapos*, many of whom he had handpicked for his senatorial slate. And twice he replied, "Man change (*sic*); they will change."

Now the movie hero has chosen to run away so he can fight another day from the safety of the company of his adoring fans. He has adamantly refused to accept invitations to three televised debates being planned by various civic and media organizations, saying debates are "divisive."

That is a rather strange thing to say for one who aspires for the presidency in a democracy. Unless he aims to rule by decree, Poe, if elected, will soon find out that debates are an essential part of governing the nation. It is through debates that laws are crafted and refined by Congress. And it is through debates, that decisions are usually arrived at in the highest councils of government. So unless Poe plans to decide policy questions on a first-come-first-served basis, he has to brace himself for some "divisive" debates among his cabinet and his advisers.

In the meantime, it is the least he can do as a candidate for the highest office to tell the Filipino people what he intends to do if they would give him the mandate to lead. That is what an electoral campaign is about: to make voters know what they can expect from a candidate for public office, especially the presidency. And what better way to inform them of his vision and plans, if any, than a forum where he can demonstrate their superiority over those of his rivals to the entire nation? If Poe still does not know the importance of holding a dialogue with the Filipino people, then his advisers have not served him well.

President Macapagal-Arroyo should know all this, but she is also shunning the debates, contemptuously dismissing them as "worthless" without the participation of Poe. But why should informing the people about what her administration has achieved and what else they can expect in a new Macapagal administration be contingent on Poe's explaining his own program of government?

Why would a debate be useful if Poe is there and worthless if he is not? Because Ms Macapagal looks upon the debate as an opportunity to expose Poe's paucity of ideas rather than to expound on the soundness of her own program of government. It seems that if she cannot pull her chief rival down, the President would rather forgo the chance to raise the standards by which voters pick their president.

It's the same with Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who sees the debates only as an opportunity to ambush the President.

Too bad that for petty political advantage three of the five presidential candidates, including the two who are leading in the polls, would squander the opportunity to help the Filipino make an informed choice in the elections. But with or without the three, the organizers of all debates must push their projects through. The empty chairs should stand as mute but eloquent witness to the three candidates' reckless disregard of the people's right to know what they are getting into when they cast their votes.

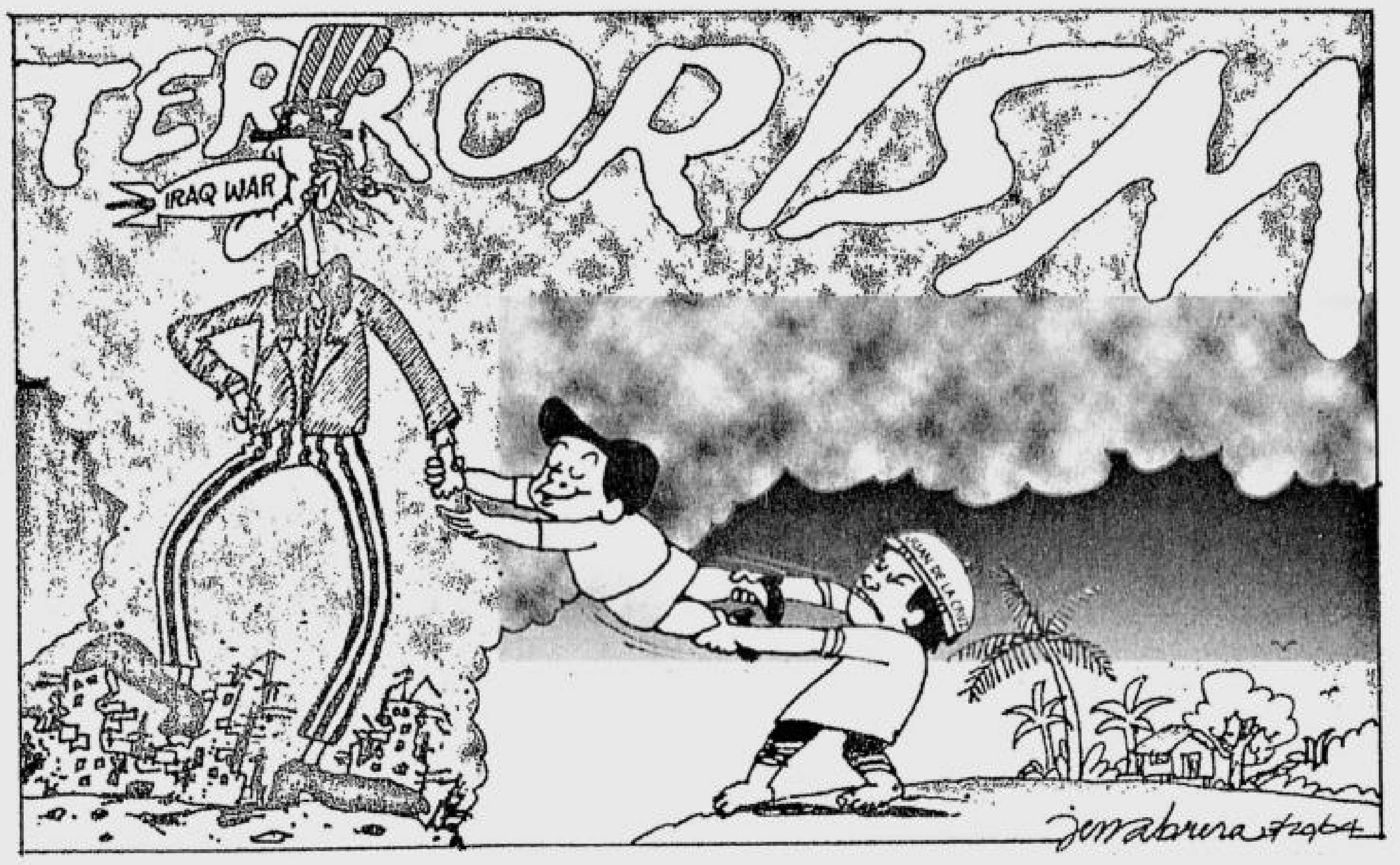
Peace and justice

FOREIGN COMMENT

ONE thing is sure: March 11 has changed Europe—above all Spain, where the governing conservatives had to swallow a heavy electoral blow. As the aura of the invulnerable superpower United States collapsed on Sept. 11, 2001, now the shock is being felt deeply from Madrid through Bern and Berlin to Warsaw. The feeling of being endangered has come threateningly close to us

March 11 must not paralyze us. It must strengthen our resolve to work for a more just world. For only that will bring security and stability—in politics and the economy.

Neue Luzerner Zeitung (Lucerne, Switzerland)



'Kasaysayan ng bayan'

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

MY good friend, Gene de los Reyes, who used to be my neighbor in Merville but has since these many years moved to more affluent surroundings, is chair of the Geronimo Berenguer de los Reyes Jr. Foundation Inc. It is involved in, among many other civic and business projects, the study and preservation of the history of the Philippines from an academic and photographic perspective.

Last Wednesday, Gene sent me a 10-volume set entitled "Kasaysayan: The Story of the Filipino People." He describes it as "a historical panorama of the events and circumstances that speak of the Filipino people's quest and aspirations for self-governance and the eventual birth of the nation."

"Kasaysayan" was a joint venture of the Reader's Digest and A-Z Direct Marketing Inc. and was published by the Asia Publishing Co. Inc. as "a special gift to the Filipino nation" to commemorate the centenary of the winning of Philippine independence in 1898. The limited edition is valuable reference material to those interested in the development of the country from pre-colonial days to the present.

The beautifully-printed publication covers 10 periods of Philippine history, to wit, The Philippine Archipelago, The Earliest Filipinos, The Spanish Conquest, Life in the Colony, Reform and Revolution, Under Stars and Stripes, The Japanese Occupation, Up from the Ashes, A Nation Reborn, and A Timeline of Philippine History.

Each of the 10 topics has been assigned to reputable historians who have presumably made well-researched studies on their respective assignments. The text is amplified with many photographs, most of them rare, to make the narration easier to visualize.

Gene is particularly proud of the historical account of the Cavite Mutiny of 1872 where, he says, "my great grandfather Crisanto de los Reyes y Mendoza (together with his colleagues Maximo Inocencio and Enrique Paraiso) significantly participated… in the Filipinos' quest for subsequent independence and nationhood."

I have gone through the work only superficially but look forward to when I will have the time to enjoy it more leisurely. One of my regrets is that I learned more about the history of the United States than our own during my school years under the American regime in this country. Our heroes were George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

To the credit of our Filipino teachers, however, and of our parents at home, Rizal was not reduced to an afterthought—we were taught not to forget him. Although we sang the Star Spangled Banner dutifully, we also adored our "land of the morning with fervor burning" and remembered Bonifacio and Mabini and our own other patriots.

These Filipino patriots are properly remembered in the "Kasaysayan" for their roles in the winning of our freedom and the establishment of a democratic government run by our own leaders. Appropriate acknowledgment is also accorded the heroes of the peace who contributed much to the enrichment of our culture and the forging of our national identity as a sovereign member of the international community.

I remember visiting the photo exhibition of the Foundation several years ago with my family at General Trias, Cavite, where we were thrilled to see old photographs dating back to the turn of the 20th century. I was particularly impressed by that picture of Malacañang Palace in 1903 clearly reflected in the transparent waters of the Pasig River.

How pure everything looked during those innocent days! There were also old maps drawn during the 1600s showing the Philippines with its antiquated but still recognizable configuration.

Today, the Foundation is inaugurating its recently acquired antiquarian photographs of the 19th and 20th centuries covering the Spanish and American periods in the Philippines. The ribbon-cutting ceremonies will cover three Exhibition Pavilions of the GBR Museum, with Ambassador Ignacio Sagaz of Spain and US Chargé d'Affaires Joseph A. Mussomeli leading the honored guests.

An added feature of the inauguration is the celebration of the centenary of flight from the Wright Brothers' first venture into the air to the present stage of modern aviation and rocketry with the exhibition in two other pavilions of model aircraft, photographs and paintings.

The Geronimo Berenguer de los Reyes Jr. Foundation Inc. is rendering valuable service to the nation by keeping alive the memories of our past that should be shared by all of us, especially the youth. It should lift the spirit of every patriotic Filipino to be informed of our arduous journey from the pre-colonial past through the travail of alien domination to our present stage of national sovereignty.

Gene de los Reyes has been addressing this task for many years with his photographic exhibits and researches, which he has maintained at no little expense and much physical inconvenience, but always with a sense of satisfaction. He deserves our encouragement and applause for his untiring efforts in preserving the historical and cultural heritage of the Filipino race.

Can we trust GMA?

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

ONE of the first things Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo did when she assumed office in 2001 was to form a Search Committee—with Vicky Garchitorena and Pat Sto. Tomas as members—tasked with making sure that only the best and the brightest filled the roughly 11,000 "presidential appointee" (6,000 career, 3,000 constitutional, 1,250 prosecutors and 500 other executive) positions, ranging from Cabinet level to assistant director level in the government and in government corporations.

This was in response to the public revulsion against several very questionable appointments that characterized her predecessor's regime, and the damage that such appointments had done to the country. The revulsion was not just about the lack of qualifications (being a drinking, gambling, or womanizing buddy seemed to be sufficient), but about the stories of appointees whose papers would disappear or who were told on their way to the Palace for swearing in that someone else had been appointed. Ms Macapagal was aware that the first major blow that exposed the soft and dirty underbelly of the Estrada regime, and which arguably could have been the start of its early demise, was when HUDCC Chair Karina Constantino-David resigned in protest over the appointment of an Erap drinking buddy as housing czar.

And Ms Macapagal, we were told, was determined not to repeat that Estrada "mistake." Thus, her Search Committee met constantly to review the resumés of candidates, with emphasis on what they knew rather than on whom they knew.

Not any more, it seems. Given the quality of some recent appointments, either the Search Committee's standards are much lower, or the committee has been relegated to the sidelines. The overriding consideration for appointment seems to be who can serve the President's personal interests best.

How else explain the recent appointments to the Commission on Elections? Or that their first move was to file a pleading that Fernando Poe Jr. was not qualified to run for the presidency. How much more blatant can they get as Gloria partisans? Nor did the slap they got from the Supreme Court faze them. The second move, at least of Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, was to ask to be put in charge of cleaning up the voters' list in Mindanao, which is the height of chutzpah, since he is alleged to have a cheating network in that area.

And now, it seems that the Search Committee has evolved into an even lower life form. It seems to have reconstituted itself into a Search and Destroy Committee charged with the task of informing incumbent presidential appointees, not only that they are, in effect, fired, but also that there is someone already waiting in the wings to replace them.

And the reason why they are being replaced? Because they all serve at the pleasure of the President, and the President presumably is no longer pleased.

I have no quarrel with the fact that presidential appointees serve "at the pleasure of the President." If they can be hired, they can be fired. But an elementary rule of fair play, implied in that kind of relationship, is that if they are going to be fired, they should at least be told why. Especially if they are doing a good job.

Alberto "Bertie" Lim has been doing a good job. For the country, that is. As one of the two private sector members of the Civil Aeronautics Board, he has zealously placed the interests of the people above the interests of special interest groups. And he has been conscientious in trying to implement EO 219, a policy which aims at the liberalization of aviation, approved during the Ramos administration.

Already, his efforts have contributed to the welfare of overseas workers who can now avail themselves of more airline services, the welfare of farmers in Central Luzon who are able to send their products (e.g.,*okra*) more cheaply and efficiently abroad, and thus improve their competitiveness, as well as the general welfare not only of those who live within the Clark-Subic transportation hub (ambitiously called the Aerotropolis) but the country as a whole.

But in the process, he may have stepped on the toes of Lucio Tan, who until Lim's appointment to the CAB was reported to hold sway over that body (a situation which in public choice theory is called "capture"). And Tan's idea of a good CAB member is probably one who places the interests of Philippine Airlines above everything else.

To make a long story short, a massive negative campaign against Lim was mounted that involved full-page advertisements, columnists and legislators who went so far as to threaten the budget of the DOTC if he was not removed. It seems obvious that somebody has gotten to the President.

Who should know better than the President how easy it is to throw mud? Or that Agile is a government-conceived project aimed at ensuring the best research behind policy recommendations, and in any case, that Lim was never connected to it? Or that Lim's credentials are of the highest. He comes from a family that has contributed to the country rather than raped it (his mother is Fanny Aldaba Lim, who served the country with honor; his sister is Che Che Lazaro) and had always stood for principle over profit.

The bottom line is that Tan seems to have somehow pleased the President, while Lim has somehow displeased her and has therefore been discarded without even a by-your-leave Which raises the question: Is she someone we can really trust to see to our welfare?

FPJ handlers draw flak

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE "HANDLERS" of Fernando Poe Jr. have lately been drawing a lot of flak. I have earlier reprinted portions of a stinging criticism written by UP writer, poet and professor Gemino Abad about the way they have foisted FPJ on the electorate, despite his obvious lack of preparedness for the job. Abad opined that FPJ's handlers committed a "crime against the people" and they cannot escape the harsh judgment of history. Then this column recently noted the poorly written letter of FPJ to Vice President Teofisto Guingona, inviting the latter to serve as his adviser. In that March 10 letter (not May 10), concepts such as the "principle of subsidiarity" came out as "principal of subsidiary." I opined that if this letter was an indication of the level of competence of FPJ's handlers and staff members, then there was very serious cause for worry about the future of the country if he should win.

* * *

Lately, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, FPJ's opposition rival, has been attacking the actor's handlers, blaming them for the failure of their two factions to come to a unity agreement by making unilateral decisions without FPJ's consent. Lacson referred to strong indications that FPJ is not in control and that he is completely under the thumb of his handlers. Lacson's complaint was reinforced by a recent report by veteran journalist Efren Danao of the Manila Times, quoting FPJ as admitting he was unaware of the decision by his senatorial candidates, Amina Rasul and Boots Anson Roa, to file in the Supreme Court a disqualification case against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

There have been many comments that FPJ would end up a puppet under the control of his handlers, owing to his lack of preparation for the job. And it's increasingly becoming evident.

* * *

Talking of Roa's and Rasul's move to disqualify GMA on the ground that she's taking advantage of her position to campaign, it's obvious that the opposition is throwing everything at her because they probably realize that she has been scoring among the D and E classes, which were once regarded as FPJ's exclusive bailiwick. The lawsuit is an admission of weakness by the opposition. In Bacolod City, K-4 candidate John Osmeña was heard asking on radio, "Since when has an incumbent official shed the advantages of incumbency?" He opined that in politics the incumbent is always given a 30 percent advantage over his rivals, "which is why the opposition is always *dejado*." It is part of the game, he added.

One might add that making every incumbent resign just because he or she is "taking advantage" of government resources would mean asking every incumbent senator, congressman, governor, mayor up to the lowest councilor to give up this edge. I have always thought that the constitutional prohibition on a second term for the president is vested with enormous wisdom precisely because it discourages him from politicking while encouraging him to make strong decisive moves. But to ask an incumbent, who by some fluke of history is able to run for election, to step down is to violate the Constitution.

* * *

Veteran public relations lady Neny Apostol Regino has a big complaint against DHL, and from what I hear, there are a number of similar complaints. DHL ought to attend to them to avert ruin and escape lawsuits. Last March 11, Neny sent an important document by DHL to her son, Jose Antonio "Anton" Regino, who works as a chef in a restaurant in Sydney. She paid the DHL office on Gil Puyat Avenue in Makati P1,186.50 as delivery fee and she was told the document would reach the addressee within 24 hours. On March 13, she called up Anton and was informed that the document had not been delivered to him. She was told by Jeng Tayag of DHL's main office that since the document was not sent through their main office on Chino Roces Avenue, it could not be delivered within 24 hours. Strangely, this was not explained to Neny when she paid at the Gil Puyat office. Tayag also mumbled something about it being a weekend, so there was no delivery although DHL ads promise delivery seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

* * *

Neny was assured that delivery would be made soonest, but five days later, Anton was still waiting for it. A follow-up call was made to Tayag who mumbled other explanations such as an incorrect address. Then she took that back and said the addressee was not in his place of work, but that a phone call was made. She also promised delivery as soon as possible. A call to Anton confirmed that the address was correct. If indeed a delivery was made, Neny pointed out, the messenger could have left the document with the restaurant manager and followed it up with a phone call, but none of that happened. In fact, since it was an important document, the manager directed his staff to stay beyond office hours to wait for it, but as of 8 p.m. no delivery was made.

Six days later, Neny was informed by Allan Mandigma that DHL manager Lory Caluag would call her about her complaint, and that a call was made by DHL to the restaurant where her son works, advising them that a delivery would be made. Still there was no delivery. On March 16, Neny filed a formal complaint at the DHL office, and at first no one bothered to call her to explain the botched delivery. Finally, after seven days, the envelope arrived at the Sydney restaurant.

The explanation offered to Neny was that no one was answering the restaurant phone number she had written on the envelope (through all the six days?) and besides, the delivery fell on a weekend. A DHL staffer finally had the good sense to get Anton's cell phone number.

Don't you think DHL users ought to be aware of this?

Parents balk at 'Kinse Anyos' ads

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

MORE than 550 people—convenors, organizers and delegates at the Second Philippine Parenting Convention held last weekend—have signed a statement condemning "in the strongest possible terms" the "Kinse Anyos" advertising campaign for Napoleon Brandy.

If you will recall, the campaign hinges on the claim of the brandy makers that their product has been "aged" for 15 years, with the supposedly "catchy" tag line: "*Nakatikim ka na ba ng kinse anyos* (Have you tasted a 15-year old)?"

Anthony Pangilinan, in whose show "A Second Look" I guested yesterday noon, tells me the tag line isn't even grammatically correct. "Drinkers don't use the term '*tikim*' to mean sampling a drink, be it brandy, beer or wine," he said. "'*Tikim*' is usually used in connection with tasting food," or sex—which is where all the outrage is coming from.

Because of "*tikim's*" sexual connotations, the public, including women's organizations, child's rights advocates, and now parents, are up in arms, claiming the advertising campaign creates an environment in which having sex with a child (which a 15-year-old is) becomes acceptable, even a status symbol.

While the billboards that carry the tag line show only a bottle of brandy, the radio spot is more daring in its implications. The storyline of the radio ad has a man coming home late and confronted by his irate wife. "Where have you been?" she demands to know. "I was at the bar," he says. "I've heard you've gone crazy over a 15-year-old working in the bar," she retorts. Of course, he explains that the 15-year-old is not a young woman but a brand of brandy.

Funny ha-ha? Tasteless in the extreme. When Anthony asked me during the show what I thought of the ads, I couldn't find enough synonyms for "tasteless." Using sex, or the implication of it, to sell a product betrays an absence of creativity on the part of the marketers. But to use child sex to sell brandy is not only stupid and crass, it is cynical and criminal. I hope the makers of the brandy and its advertisers spend the rest of their natural lives behind bars for this transgression and their arrogance.

* * *

BUT where was I? Oh yes, the message of the parents to the advertisers. I decided to re-print the statement mainly because I was astonished at the vehemence of their message, which can be gleaned just by reading the title of their statement: Parents to "Kinse Anyos" Advertisers: Mahiya Kayo! Get Off the Air!

And I thought all they talked about at the convention was proper child-rearing techniques and family values! Then again, maybe that's why the participants found the ad campaign particularly offensive. Here's the statement in full:

"The Second Philippine Parenting Convention convenors, organizers, and delegates unite, stand together and condemn in the strongest possible terms the spirit and intent behind the Napoleon brandy 'Kinse Anyos' advertising campaign.

"As parents, it is our prime responsibility to nurture our families in the shelter of true community, to shield our spouses and our children from all attempts to corrupt their hearts and minds, to rob them of their innocence, their physical and emotional safety, their right to decent society. Claiming to be creative, the campaign is totally destructive, irresponsible, exploitative and indecent, a violent and vulgar assault against our vision to build morally righteous and enlightened communities. Its defiance of the AdBoard's order to pull out the offensive ads shows disrespect and total disregard for accountability to society. Their actions are an affront to the advertising industry, self-regulated for over 25 years now.

"Our Lord Jesus Himself said, 'Whoever causes even just one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone around his neck, and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.' We who have ears would be wise to heed this warning and we move to honor and follow-through on our God's intent.

"In solidarity with all God-fearing citizens, we call for the immediate pull-out of the offensive 'Kinse Anyos' campaign and demand an apology from its authors and sponsors for foisting this unholy venom upon our already polluted and toxic environment."

* * *

I'M GLAD the parents taking part in the convention thought it part of their social responsibility and their responsibility as molders of the next generation to decry this latest affront to public sensibilities and abuse of children through advertising.

I'm particularly glad that the fathers at the gathering, led by Anthony, chose to append their signatures to the statement. If you were a parent to a 15-year-old girl, would you allow this sly, slimy invitation to men to "taste" her pass without comment or protest? I think not. For their daughters' sake, I hope the brandy makers and their marketers didn't have their nubile bodies in mind while they were conceptualizing the campaign.

* * *

WOMEN and men—menopausal or not, of a certain age or well below it—can still catch the theater sensation of the season "Menopause the Musical" next Sunday, March 28, at the Music Museum. If they catch the Sunday matinee at 4 p.m., they will help fund programs for survivors of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women. The March 28 matinee is for the benefit of Kalakasan, or the Kababaihan Laban sa Karahasan.

Kalakasan is an NGO that provides services to women victims of violence and their children, including a telephone counseling hotline, and embarks as well on advocacy programs on VAW, reproductive health and rights and women's rights. The Kalakasan hotline number is 735-5555.

Those interested in this benefit performance of "Menopause the Musical" may call 892-1546 for reservations.

Frozen music

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

JUST off Taft Avenue on what used to be called Calle San Luis (now T.M. Kalaw), an old Methodist church stands. It was probably in ruins after the Liberation of 1945 but has since been rebuilt in the original design. Like all Protestant churches, it is clean and neat, with none of the hundred and one vendors and the attendant garbage.

Some time during the first decade of the 20th century, one of their ministers, George Miller, traveled to the Philippines and took up residence in the area which, without the neo-classical government buildings that now house the Department of Tourism and the National Museum, would have given him an unobstructed view of the Walled City and no doubt aroused his curiosity.

Eventually the minister published a book, titled "Interesting Manila," (1906) highlighting what he considered as the marvels of a European medieval city in the Far East. He noted that church organs in Europe were usually replaced or at least restored but those of Manila were as they were first installed. There was at the time no really modern organ. The best of them, according to Miller, was the one in Santo Domingo. The pumping device was much older than the organ and, instead of a handle, a boy had to step upon two treadles, which he worked by shifting his weight from one to the other. It contained a fine "double open diapason" on the pedals, with the longest pipe reaching up 18 ft above the ground.

While the one of Sta. Cruz Church was the pride of Manila in its day, by the turn of the century the console was detached from the organ and reversed, facing the altar, and furnishing the only example of its kind in the city. The keys were curiously of all heights and sizes, and they were brown with age. Many of the ivories were missing and the "dip" or distance the key could be pushed down varied from nothing up to an inch or so. The bellows of the cathedral organ told of its age since their style had gone out of fashion around 1860.

The cases were generally beautiful, made of native wood. The Augustinians had a carved case of molave for their 50-year-old organ that was still in operation.

But it was the choir lofts that Miller found impressive. Here he waxed poetic, admiring "the dusty colored glass, the cobwebs in the corners, the changing shadows, the carved lecterns and seat, and the great massive chant books with their square inch-big notes on staves six inches wide, printed by hand on pages of rawhide three feet square, are curios well worth hunting for."

The bamboo organ at Las Piñas, while perhaps not famous, was worth the long drive. Its builder, Padre Diego Cera, had been sent over in the 18th century, specifically to build organs. But when he arrived, he found neither metal nor wire, nor pipes, nor suitable wood, nor tanned leather, nor wire, nor keys, nor anything else used to build organs. So he built one of bamboo.

At the time, the Bamboo Organ of Las Piñas was 109 years. By that time the "slides" had stuck and few of the top knobs would draw. The pipes were full of dirt but appeared to be as good as the day they were finished back in the late 1790s.

Father Cera apparently built two of these bamboo organs; the other was sent as a gift to the queen of Spain who prized it highly since there wasn't another like it. Unless the one in Spain is still around, the organ at Las Piñas is indeed unique.

Father Cera constructed the organ of the Recollects' church in Intramuros as well, but again by the turn of the century, it was mute. Its keys were brown and broken. The big diapasons were crushed and drooping. It always stood on the south gallery of the nave, with a number of carved angels about the cornice of the church, each holding a trumpet. These pipes were connected with the main organ by tubes and any or all could be sounded at the command of the organist. Although time and use had worn the organ, Spanish soldiers quartered in the church in 1898 had further torn out the pipes, broken the keys and defaced the organ. However, a war damage claim for P800 was due and the organ was to be restored.

Looking at the high buttresses, the embattled towers, the up-lifted crosses, he saw Intramuros as "frozen music." The convents of Manila presented an uninteresting exterior, but the beauty of their inner cloisters and courts contrasted with the somber exteriors. They were after all built to shut out the world. All had the Roman arches and retreating colonnades, walls hung with old paintings of saints and martyrs.

The oldest were nearly obliterated by time, the tropical heat and the moisture. Colors had faded and there were no dates nor did anyone know how old these were.

It was an adventure to visit 16th-century monasticism in actual operation. The convents represented the architecture of 300 years earlier; they contained the books, the paintings, the bells, the furniture, the mode of dress and the habits of life of an age when Columbus was discovering America. It was like a time machine dropping into the past and finding it lived.

Manila was a city of churches. From the bay, her skyline was an outline of domes and cupolas of her temples. China had her walls, Egypt her pyramids and Manila had her churches. The total number was impossible to tell and even in Intramuros, there were so many sanctuaries and chapels that one was never sure. These had been rebuilt many times because of earthquakes but the restorations were generally in keeping with the originals. These were considered fitting monuments to the labor of thousands of Filipinos and their great love of God.

Ants and audit

YOUNG BLOOD

Jennifer Galang

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—**Ed.**

THE METER is ticking right now. My firm charges my client hundreds of pesos for every hour that I work. Auditing firms are in the middle of the "busy season" at the moment, so I am expected to work like a reliable soldier ant programmed to hoard food until the first raindrops fall. My desk is hopelessly covered with tons of paperwork. My laptop's taskbar shows a dozen open documents and spreadsheets, blinking persistently to remind me of the impending deadline. But, dear God, I have to take a breather to hopefully retain—no, regain—my sanity.

When my friends ask me what company I work for now, I proudly give the name of the largest auditing firm in the country. I proceed to brag a little (and a little more to those who look unconvinced) and sway (or trick) them into thinking what a great job I have.

Let's take a look at what I have been doing with my life since July. For those of you who don't know what an auditor does, to put it simply, an auditor (or an auditing firm) is hired by a company to lend credibility to its financial reports—a requirement of the government that most companies cannot forgo.

But to give you the real picture, as an auditor, I eat and breathe numbers—more numbers than I have added and analyzed in my pre-auditing life. I meet all sorts of people, and enough of them to fill my new address book. Some are really important. With most I have made friends, while others I forget the moment their names pass through my brain.

I charm and argue with my clients into getting what I need. I pretend to know more than what I know and try to impress them when they are questioning my competence. I take advantage of every waking minute to finish an assigned job before deadline, sometimes going home when some people are already getting ready for an early morning jog.

There are times when I have to work in front of a computer all day (and all night) like a zombie. There are also times when I have to get a week's worth of exercise--in unbelievably inhuman and rather expensive high heels—by holding interviews and getting paperwork from different departments of a large client housed in two large, tall buildings.

I never wanted to join an auditing firm for I had heard stories of how tough it can be to work for one. But after passing the board exams, I found myself doing what most of my batchmates were doing, which was applying for a job in auditing firms. I guess it's obvious how it turned out: I finally joined the endless line of soldier ants.

In defense of these respectable firms, they offer excellent training and the pay is not so bad. In fact, I received a hefty signing bonus upon joining this firm. More importantly, they recognize the fact that their most valuable asset is their people. They have a peculiar way of pampering us—not by giving us less stuff to do (I wish), but by letting us do tons of work in the most comfortable way possible (if in fact it is possible).

We go through invaluable training programs and seminars to "increase our market value." The firms sponsor graduate studies and training abroad. New hires are given a new laptop and provided a work area conducive for long hours of working. We enjoy the amenities of a gym within the office, have occasional beer parties, yoga and taebo sessions, in-house counseling, and other stuff intended to make us forget for a while the grueling hours ahead.

But no matter how demanding the work gets to be, I have no plans of leaving. Why? Because what I have already learned within a few months on this job is already more than what I have learned in the four years I spent in college. Because I have met a lot of interesting people and made a lot of caring friends in this firm and that makes all the work bearable and the long hours pass quickly. In spite of—no, because of—all the crap I just said, the bottom line is I have come to love what I'm doing. I have come to love auditing.

Now, wait a minute! That last paragraph was supposed to end this article. But after working during the weekend until the wee hours of the morning, I suddenly feel like revising it.

I am only 20, for Pete's sake! Some guys my age are still in college—enjoying the regular allowance they are receiving from their parents. Oh, how I miss the feeling of a carefree student! Reality has grabbed me and sent me crashing down with a big thud. Here I am, dark eye bags and all, working like there's no tomorrow. Tons of paperwork. Yellow post-its with all the things I have to do. The deadlines. The burden of time.

Aaaargh! It's 3 a.m. in the morning, for crying out loud!

Oh well, this is what I do. This is what I am.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go back and work like a reliable soldier ant.

Jennifer Galang, 20, graduated from De La Salle University. She took the CPA board exams in May 2003 and placed second. Her goal is to be an audit partner someday—a queen ant, if you may.

THEY SAID

Population problem

"What is painfully clear today is that the Philippines cannot support 84 million, let alone the 160 million it will have by 2030 if the growth rate is not slowed."

—Economist Peter Wallace, urging the government to act on the rapid population growth of the country

What support?

"Did the NPA (New People's Army) also carry posters declaring support for FPJ (Fernando Poe Jr.)?"

—Communist Party of the Philippines spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, denying claims of the opposition that the rebels are supporting actor Fernando Poe Jr.

Undeserving

"Why would you be paying them benefits when they are fighting the source of those benefits?

—Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya, defending the measly daily allowance given to the 200 Magdalo soldiers

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All that beef about buffalo meat

AS an ordinary consumer, may I put in my two cents' worth on the issue of buffalo meat importation. At the outset, I would say that businessmen with vested interests should not decide for themselves what the public, in the first place, should be free to decide on.

Alternative sources of food which are safe to eat and which minimum wage earners can afford should be made available in wet markets around the country. Why deprive us, the general public, of food choices because of infighting between and among businessmen?

The bottom line is—food on the table. Pork prices have reached stratospheric heights. How do hog raisers justify that fact? And while the hog industry people are pointing fingers at each other, why not allow us, in the meantime, to decide whether we the consumers, would like to avail of the alternative food source being offered to us? It's as simple as that. Free trade or something like it.

And while we're at it, what's the big deal about carabao meat, anyway? People in the countryside eat it, but not in the disparaging manner Alberto Lim put it in his letter about Filipinos being a nation of dog eaters. Come on, let's get real. In these hard and uncertain times, we will try anything to feed our families that our pockets can afford—"cheap" carabao meat and all.

—RIZZA M. PLAMENCO,
Cardinal Rosales Street,
Catbalogan, Samar

Do MRT coaches have to be so crowded?

THE METRO Rail Transit along Edsa has become very popular among regular commuters like myself because of its cleanliness, realibility, comfortable air-conditioning, speed, security, cheaper fares and many other reasons.

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Without doubt, it wants to maximize the earnings of its trains. But is it all just about profits? What about public service?

—LUIS S. SANTOS JR.,
Unit T-17, San Jose Condo,
62 Maginoo St.,
Central, Quezon City

LETTERS
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

More about Brother Eddie

YOUR newspaper does not have much written about Bro. Eddie Villanueva. Many readers are interested to read more about him.

Among the presidential candidates, he has the genuine political will to change the system of our government. He might pull a big surprise against his opponents as many undecided voters are now choosing him as an alternative candidate who will bring real reform in the government.

—VALDEZ SONG,
songazel@yahoo.com

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I WOULD like to inquire why the column of Bambi Harper titled "Taal once more" published in the INQUIRER last March 6, 2004 was not online. It was the only article that was erased from among all the others. I'm from Taal, Batangas and was planning to e-mail it to my relatives and *kababayan* abroad but that article was missing. Was the article not interesting enough? Or did you not want to offend the Church? Is this the INQUIRER's idea of censorship?

I have also wondered why the articles of Abou-Alsamh Rasheed are only found online. Are they not worthy of seeing print? I think a foreigner's view of our country, especially that of an astute observer as Rasheed, is food for thought for our local readers. I would understand it if Rasheed's writings were censored in Malaysia where there is no freedom of the press. Don't we boast of such freedom or are we just pretending? I hope you can indulge me with an answer.

—RAMON G. ORLINA,
2174 Ilaw ng Nayon St.,
Sampaloc, Manila 1008

INQ7.net and the Philippine Daily Inquirer are separate companies with separate editorial teams. Rasheed is an INQ7.net, not INQUIRER, columnist (as is indicated by the tag "online columnist" in his column graphic) so he does not appear on print, only online.

Ms Harper's column was inadvertently omitted from the website. The error has since been corrected.

—INQ7.net editors

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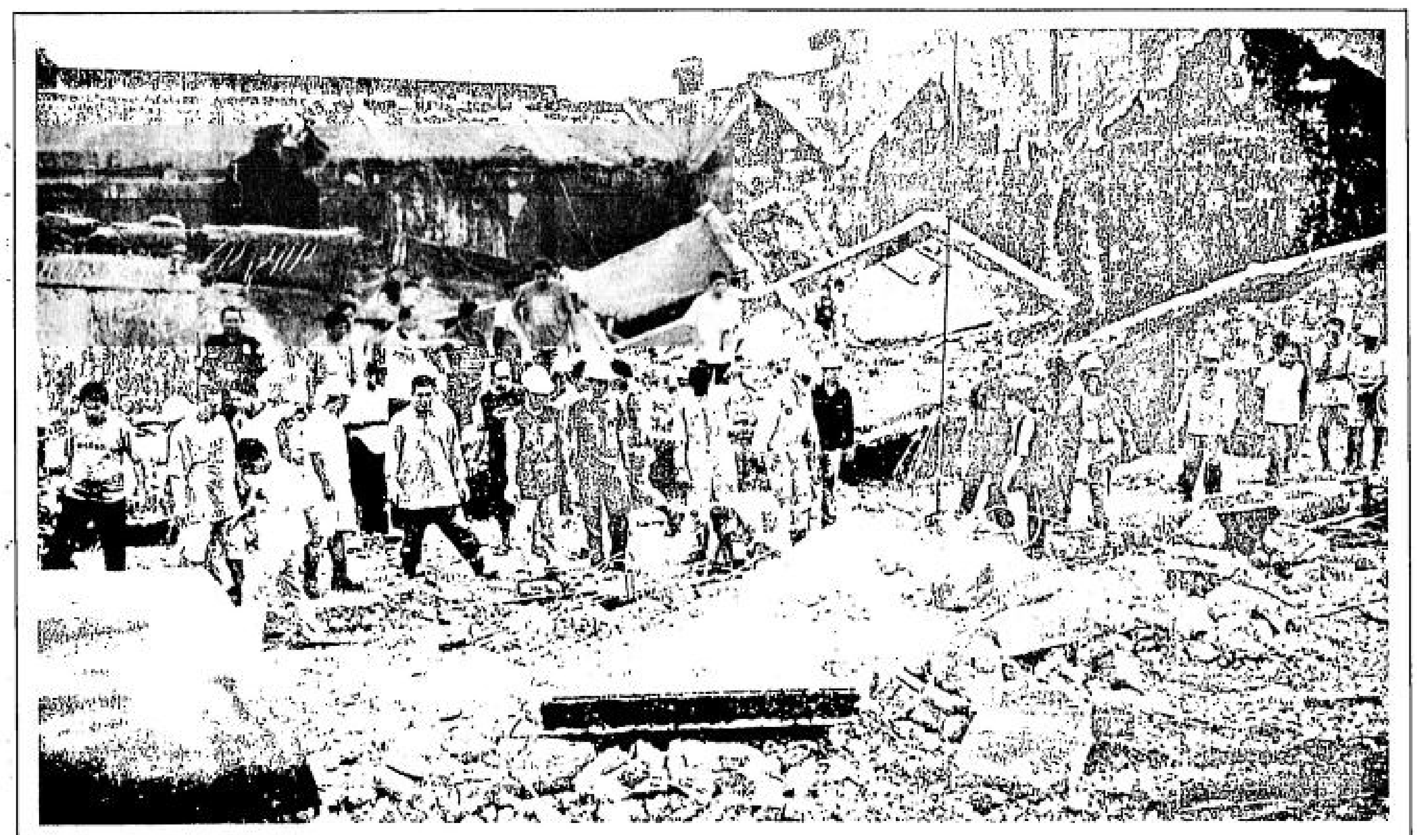


BUILDING COLLAPSE
Rescuers arrive at the scene of an abandoned three-story building in Nasipit town, Agusan del Norte Thursday, after the building collapsed Wednesday when pilferers tried to steal steel bars inside. At least six persons died in the incident. EPA

Misamis execs lift ban on sale of fish from red tide areas

OZAMIZ CITY—Local officials in Misamis Occidental agreed to lift the ban on the catching and selling of fish caught in the waters of Baliangao, Plaridel and Lopez Jaena towns after test results showed the organisms that were causing red tide are of the nontoxic species.

"The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) through its regional office in Cagayan de Oro has recommended the lift order after laboratory analysis found the microorganisms non-toxic," said Gov. Loreto Leo Ocampos.

Ocampos said it was now safe to eat fish caught from waters in the said towns. "I enjoined Misamisnons to resume eating fish," he said.

Residents reported incidents of fish kill and blamed the reddening of the waters as the culprit.

The phenomenon stirred the province whose population gets about a third of its fish supply from the affected areas.

Officials immediately banned the catching and selling of fish. Government agencies in the affected towns immediately handed out relief assistance to displaced fisherfolk.

Fishermen said they noticed the phenomenon as early as March 11 but they started to be alarmed only when they noticed schools of fish floating dead in the waters.

The largest red tide patch was experienced in Plaridel town that covered 600 hectares of fishing ground for two days.

Ocampos said based on the findings, fish died because of suffocation from lack of oxygen and not from toxin.

This, he said, explains why people in several villages of Barangay Santa Cruz in Plaridel were not poisoned despite eating dying fish on Saturday.

"The red tide phenomenon occurred because of the fast rate of expansion of a particular microorganism population owing to the presence of growth-enhancing substances and the rise in temperature," Ocampos explained, quoting the findings of experts.

Manolita Morales, vice president of the environmental group Save Nature Society (SNS), said the growth-enhancing substances found in the BFAR tests were phosphate and nitrate, which are found in commercial fertilizers.

Morales' group has tapped experts to study the BFAR's findings.

She said there are suspicions the growth-enhancing substances came from agricultural runoff emptied into the sea by the rivers.

"In our context here, there can be no other source of such substances than our agricultural fields," she said. *Ryan Rosauro, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

21 dead in 2 collisions in Quezon, Samar areas

AT LEAST 21 persons were killed in two separate collisions Thursday and yesterday dawn in Samar and Quezon provinces. Twelve persons died when a passenger vehicle collided with a cargo truck in Sta. Margarita, Samar on Thursday.

Eleven of the victims died on the spot while another passenger died Friday morning in a private hospital in Calbayog City, according to Cherilyn Lubang of the Office of Civil Defense-Eastern Visayas.

A police report said the victims were on board a small van.

The tragedy took place in Barangay Solsogon of Sta. Margarita around 9:45 a.m. The van was bound for Calbayog City from Gandara town, some 25 km from Sta. Margarita.

The fatalities were identified as Gandara residents Epifanio Aliman Jr. of Barangay Burabod, Florencio Alabado Jr. and Divina Cahusay and her year-old son Lopez Jr., both of Barangay Pangi, and spouses Germano and Soledad Baylon of Barangay Lungib; Danilo Lumahan, Jay Calda and Francis Emerson Palup, all of Barangay Inuragyao, Sta. Margarita; Josefina Uy, the ex-chair of Barangay San Luis, Pagsanjan town and Leticia Ambal, barangay treasurer of the same barangay.

Yesterday morning, Noli Flordeliza of Sampaloc, Manila died at St. Camillus Hospital in Calbayog City, 8 km from the site of the collision. He was to visit a relative in Calbayog City.

The driver of the van and another passenger identified as Dante Descallar of Barangay Balud are still in the hospital.

In Sariaya, Quezon, at least nine persons died on the spot at dawn yesterday, two of them beheaded by sharp steel railings in seats, when the Manila-bound bus they were riding along the Maharlika Highway in Barangay Sto. Cristo, bumped the rear of a 10-wheel truck.

Four of the fatalities were identified as Teresita Palenzuela, of Albay; Leonisa Guray and Petronia St. Buena of Quezon City; and Franco Francisco Ramiro of Samar.

Police found the headless bodies of Ramiro and an unidentified male passenger still pinned by steel railings that protruded from the seats and bus sidings. The severed heads were found at the back of the bus.

SPO1 Charlie Gutierrez, police investigator, said Elavel Transit driven by Freddie de la Cruz, had 45 passengers. *Joey Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau and Delfin Mallari, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Guards of Canadian mine firm fire at protesters

ZAMBOANGA CITY—At least four persons were wounded when guards of a Canadian mining firm in Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte fired at a group of protesters led by the Save Paradise Watershed Movement on Wednesday.

Godofredo Galos, the group's chair, said they were trying to block a road in Barangay Pisawak to prevent workers of the Toronto Ventures Inc. (TVI) from transporting heavy equipment to be used in its mining activities.

Galos said company guards fired on their group, hitting Eddie Cayabyab, Timuay Macario Salakaw, Juan Veloria and Gaudencia Montemor.

Supt. Marcelino Lipana, Zamboanga del Norte police chief, said the four protesters were not seriously injured.

Rey Magpantay, a TVI official, said their guards acted in self-defense.

Magpantay said the protesters became unruly and hurled stones at the workers, who were bringing equipment to Sitio Canatuan in Barangay Tabayo, the mining site.

He criticized the protesters for blocking the road.

Galos' group, composed of Subanen natives, environmentalists and village officials, has been opposing TVI's activities and on March 15, started barricading the road leading to Canatuan.

On the same day, they also seized a piece of heavy equipment belonging to a construction company acting as a TVI subcontractor.

"We will fight until the last drop of our blood," Onsino Mato, spokesperson of the Subanens, declared.

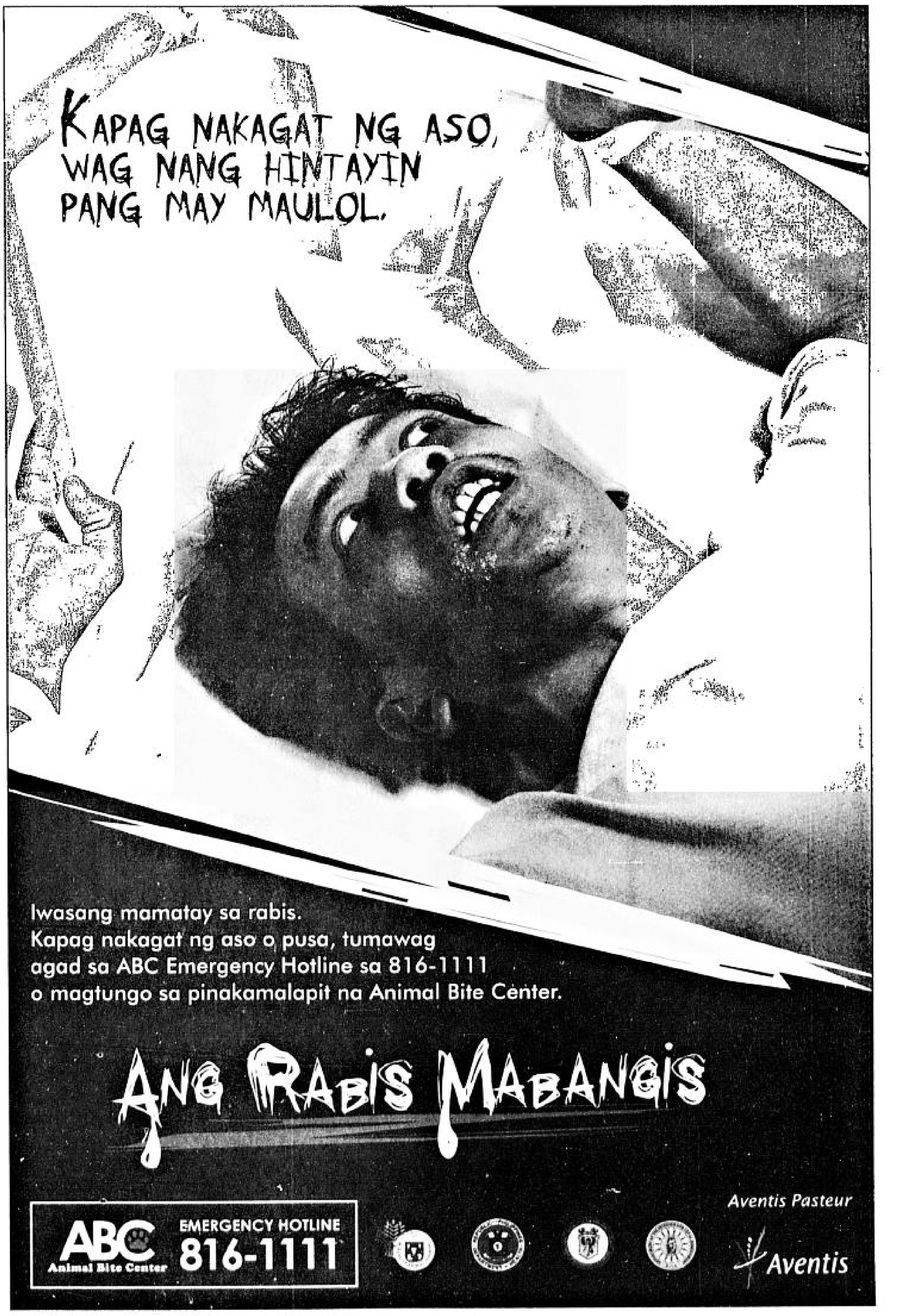
Mato said TVI was desecrating their sacred place to search for gold and silver.

Galos said aside from violating the rights of the natives, TVI's activities also caused pollution in the rivers of the area.

"Their wastes are dumped into our river, their wastes are contaminated with mercury and cyanide," he said.

TVI denied the charges saying it was a responsible company and that it had conducted dialogues with the natives before operations started.

Magpantay also denied that the company caused pollution of the rivers. *Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



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Artists celebrate wartime friendship

RAUL Agner (left), head of the Atitipalo art group, explains one of his paintings to young viewers of their Balangiga art exhibit in Hiroshima, Japan, in August 2002. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By Rolando O. Borrinaga
Biliran, Biliran

A WARTIME friendship that first went to the books has been interpreted in various art forms and will be shown to the public during the first art exhibit to be held in Biliran province.

On March 22-24, the Atitipalo Visual Arts Group of Palo, Leyte, will present "Sunset in Biliran: An Art Exhibit."

Sponsored by the municipal government of Biliran, in collaboration with the Biliran Historical and Cultural Society and Peace Development Fund, the exhibit will be held on the ground floor of Tonelete Home on San Roque Street in Biliran town.

The exhibit aims to highlight the peaceful World War II experience of Biliran town, as immortalized in two books of memoirs of Pvt. Kennosuke Nakajima, a radio operator assigned at the local headquarters of a company of Japanese Imperial Army soldiers.

Nakajima was the only soldier assigned to Biliran who had survived the war. He died in 1997.

Francisca Laurente-Chan, 77, Nakajima's best friend in Biliran during the war, will cut the ceremonial ribbon of the exhibit.

She is presented as "Elsa" in the Nakajima memoirs and details of his visits to her house and their friendship are memorialized in the two books, both written in Japanese.

The first book, "Leyte Island: Wandering Between Life and Death," was published in 1986. The second, "Leyte's Songs for the Dead," was published in 1988.

The Atitipalo group of artists is composed of Raul Agner, Leo Acebedo, Rico Palacio and Archie Zabala, all natives of Palo, Leyte. It has mounted the most number of exhibits among the art groups in Leyte-Samar.

Its last exhibit, "Echoes of Balangiga," was held in Tacloban City from September to October, 2001, and spanned the centennial of the Balangiga Massacre in 1901 and the 57th commemoration of the Leyte Landing.

Representative art works from the same exhibit were shown in Hiroshima, Japan, in August 2002, during the 57th anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bombing.

Symbol for peacemaking

Agner, leader of the Atitipalo artists, provided an overview of the exhibit. He wrote:

"Kennosuke Nakajima's memoirs reads like an ethnographic account of Biliran's people and their culture. It is full of imagery and easily lends itself to a 'horror vacui' rendition on canvas, suited to the Atitipalo group's community-oriented art's partiality to indigenous forms, patterns, color and sensibilities.

"But what is most arresting is this WW II Japanese soldier's disenchantment and final abandonment of war, to a point of sounding like a peace advocate, his radio operator's duties and military uniform notwithstanding.

"Having been fed with the indelible image of the 'Hapon' as a ruthless soldier, present-day Leyteños, including the artists, find Nakajima a refreshing, admirable and a very rare exception.

"As partners with the Peace Development Fund and the Shitaba Seminar students, the Atitipalo artists see him as an inspiring symbol for peacemaking and an even more interesting thematic subject for art-making."

The artists received a grant to produce their works from the Peace Development Fund, a small nongovernment organization funded by book royalties of Prof. Tomoe Shitaba of the Tokyo International University in Saitama, Japan, and occasional contributions from his seminar students who have joined the yearly Philippine study tour since 1996.

The PDF co-sponsors the exhibit, along with the Biliran Historical and Cultural Society, the provincial-level group initiated by Gov. Rogelio Espina and involved in the preservation and promotion of the history and culture of the island-province.

Keepers of memory

Although Naval, the capital town, was considered an exhibit venue, the final decision favored Biliran town, whose residents and young people are the best keepers of the memory interpreted by the artists.

"The young people of Biliran town would take greater interest in, and could better appreciate the exhibit because it presents the experience of their forebears," said Catalina Velasquez, 76, a civic leader in Naval and Chan's contemporary in Biliran town.

To maximize the educational impact of the exhibit, the municipal government will display local museum items in the same venue. The items won a prize during the inter-municipal historical display booth contest in Naval on the occasion of the 11th anniversary celebration of Biliran province on May 11 last year.

Letters have been sent to various school administrators to allow elementary, high school and college students in Biliran town to view the simultaneous exhibits.

Excerpts of the Nakajima memoirs that have been translated to English and related wartime accounts about Biliran town are available online at www.geocities.com/rolborr/sunintro.html.

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Erap disowns lawyer, says GMA not aware of villa visit

From page A1

"How could Fortun talk on my behalf? I have not seen him for a long time," Estrada said, in a telephone interview from San Juan Medical Center, where he was visiting his ailing mother.

He said he had already dismissed Fortun and other private lawyers who represented him in the plunder and graft cases at the Sandiganbayan.

Estrada also said President Macapagal-Arroyo did not know about his visits to the rest house.

"*Hindi naman. Hindi niya alam* (I don't think so. She does not know about it)," he said.

Lawyer Marichu Lambino, the legal counsel of those who charged Ms Macapagal and others before the Ombudsman, said they will use video footage of Fortun's admission as "first-hand information" and "evidence" against the President and other officials.

"We are going to file a motion to admit as evidence the declaration of Fortun as spokesperson and lawyer of Estrada," she said, adding that the statements were "first-hand evidence" and an "eyewitness account."

"She (Ms Macapagal) is not at fault. She does not know. We just passed by the rest house," Estrada said of the Dec. 25 visit he had paid to his mother in Greenhills, San Juan. Estrada has admitted stopping by his rest house before proceeding to San Juan that day.

Sandiganbayan officials and Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio have said that that trip—as well as the one Estrada made on Jan. 1—had no authority from the Sandiganbayan, where Estrada is facing plunder and graft charges.

Estrada hit Fortun for making a big fuss of the whole issue.

Commenting on Fortun's statements aired over ANC, Villa-Ignacio remarked in jest: "Is he mad at his client?"

He said Fortun wasn't his spokesperson either. "I cannot afford one," he said.

The INQUIRER tried to contact Fortun by calling and sending text messages through his mobile phone, but to no avail.

In his cable TV interview, Fortun said that in allowing Estrada to stay in his rest house and as well as make unauthorized trips to San Juan, the Palace had in effect "bypassed" the powers of the court.

"Objectively and as a lawyer, yes. I would think that the court has been bypassed. Yes. The PlunderWatch group has initiated, I would think, the correct steps questioning the actions of whomever before the court (to) let the court decide on what sanctions to be imposed."

Fortun said he also supports the filing of graft charges against Ms Macapagal, Philippine National Police chief Hermogenes Ebdane and other officials before the Ombudsman.

Private prosecutors in the graft and plunder case against Estrada and the watchdog group PlunderWatch have earlier filed criminal complaints against the President and other ranking officials for "conniving with or consenting to (Estrada's) evasion of prison," and for usurpation of judicial functions."

But Fortun also said that, while the Macapagal administration broke the law in allowing Estrada to leave his detention quarters in Camp Capinpin, the government did right in granting the concession to Estrada, in keeping with what he called humanitarian treatment given to "former heads of state who are now facing charges."

"They are being given treatment which is commensurate with the position they used to hold," he said, citing the case of former Indonesian President Suharto, who is being held in a "city arrest."

Last week, Fortun was also quoted in a press statement released by the Partido ng Masang Pilipino as saying that Estrada stayed in his rest house on only two occasions.

But in Victorias City, Negros Occidental, Ms Macapagal snapped back at Estrada for saying, through a phone patch at a rally for presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. in Iligan City, that Ms Macapagal's was a "corrupt government."

"Well, I can only say to Mr. Estrada, I'm very kind to him ... for humanitarian reason. I can only answer 'Look who's talking!'" a visibly irked President told reporters.

Estrada has been detained since April 2001 on charges he amassed P4 billion in his 31 months in office.

The President, who has drawn flak for being lenient to Estrada and justifying his leaving his detention quarters, has announced a policy of humane treatment and compassion for Estrada.

But Estrada's campaign speech the other day drew him into a word war with Ms Macapagal. Before she made her strongest remark yet against Estrada, she said Estrada's endorsement of Poe proved that she had made no deals with the ousted leader.

"First, that just shows that Estrada is still with the opposition and that there's no political deal between us. I think that's the most important thing to be said there," she said.

Former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, a staunch Estrada ally who is running for senator under Ms Macapagal's K-4 coalition, said Poe had solicited Estrada's campaign statement.

"Why will he come out and ask for a vote for Poe? Because Poe asked for it," Santiago told the INQUIRER.

But Santiago, who had to ask Estrada's permission before joining the administration ticket, said Estrada should try to be a "hero" for the sake of national unity.

Senate President Franklin Drilon welcomed Estrada's coming out in support of Poe.

"I'm not very surprised that (Estrada) endorsed Mr. FPJ. They've been good friends of good standing but more importantly, FPJ will continue to carry the baggage of former President Estrada and this (rally speech) would reinforce that baggage," Drilon told reporters here. *With a report from Juliet L. Javellana*

Taiwan ...

From page A1

Chiou added that "the president is conscious" and "can still direct the nation's affairs."

Chen was riding in a red convertible four-wheel-drive vehicle past crowds lining the streets in his hometown. People were setting off celebratory fireworks as he drove by and early media reports said he was injured by firecrackers.

"It was definitely a gun attack," Chiou said, adding that officials found one bullet.

"The vice president first felt pain in her knee and she thought it was caused by firecrackers," Chiou said.

"Then the president felt some wetness on his stomach area, and then they realized something wrong."

Television pictures showed Chen waving to the crowds from the back of a red four-wheel-drive vehicle alongside Lu, with motorcycle outriders by his side.

From knee to stomach

A white-jacketed security guard was seen standing directly behind Lu as part of a large motorcade. The shooting incident was not shown by local television, but the red car was later shown being driven away with what appeared to be a bullet hole in the windscreen.

"The bullet hit ... Vice President Annette Lu before hitting Chen Shui-bian's stomach," said lawmaker Wang Sing-nan from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, who was with Chen at the hospital.

"The president suffered a deep wound about three centimeters (1.2 inches) deep in the stomach," Wang told TVBS.

Both Chen and opposition challenger Lien Chan spent Friday doing last-minute campaigning in the south of the island ahead of the election in which the two rivals are reported to be running neck and neck.

The National Security Council said it had stepped up security for opposition Kuomintang (KMT) candidate Lien and his deputy James Soong following the shooting. Both the Kuomintang and the DPP were due to hold final campaign rallies on Friday night.

The campaign has been long and spiteful, with much acrimony over Chen's plans to hold a referendum vote separate from the presidential election centered on relations between the island and mainland China.

Lien and Chen agree on most of the basic issues involving China policy. Neither candidate favors immediate unification, and both are highly distrustful of the Communist leadership.

Separate from China

However, Chen has been more aggressive in pushing for a Taiwanese identity separate from China's, and this has raised tensions with Beijing. China has threatened to attack if Taiwan seeks a permanent split.

The referendum is seen as an attempt by Chen to push the island further down the road toward independence, something China has threatened to oppose by military force.

Voters will be asked whether Taiwan should beef up its defenses to protect against hundreds of Chinese missiles pointed at the island.

Rebuke

The referendum has been criticized by France, Japan, Germany, the European Union and, most crucially in a rare rebuke, by its biggest ally, protector and arms supplier, the United States.

The result of the election—and the two-question referendum that runs alongside it—will be closely monitored by China.

China and Taiwan split at the end of a civil war in 1949. Despite over half a century of de facto independent rule on Taiwan, the government in Beijing still claims the island is a renegade province which must be brought back under its rule. *AP, AFP*

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Palace cheers Erap visit to ma

MALACAÑANG yesterday cheered the Sandiganbayan for allowing Joseph Estrada to visit his mother at the San Juan Medical Center.

"We're happy that former President Estrada was granted permission by the Sandiganbayan to visit his ailing mother," Ignacio Bunye, spokesperson for President Macapagal-Arroyo, told reporters at a briefing. "This would be consistent with the posture of the President to extend humane treatment to the former President."

Bunye denied that Malacañang had influenced the anti-graft court's decision in granting Estrada a 36-hour pass to gain support from his supporters for Ms Macapagal's bid for a six-year term.

"President Gloria is just really interested in the humane treatment of the former chief executive," he said.

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From page A1

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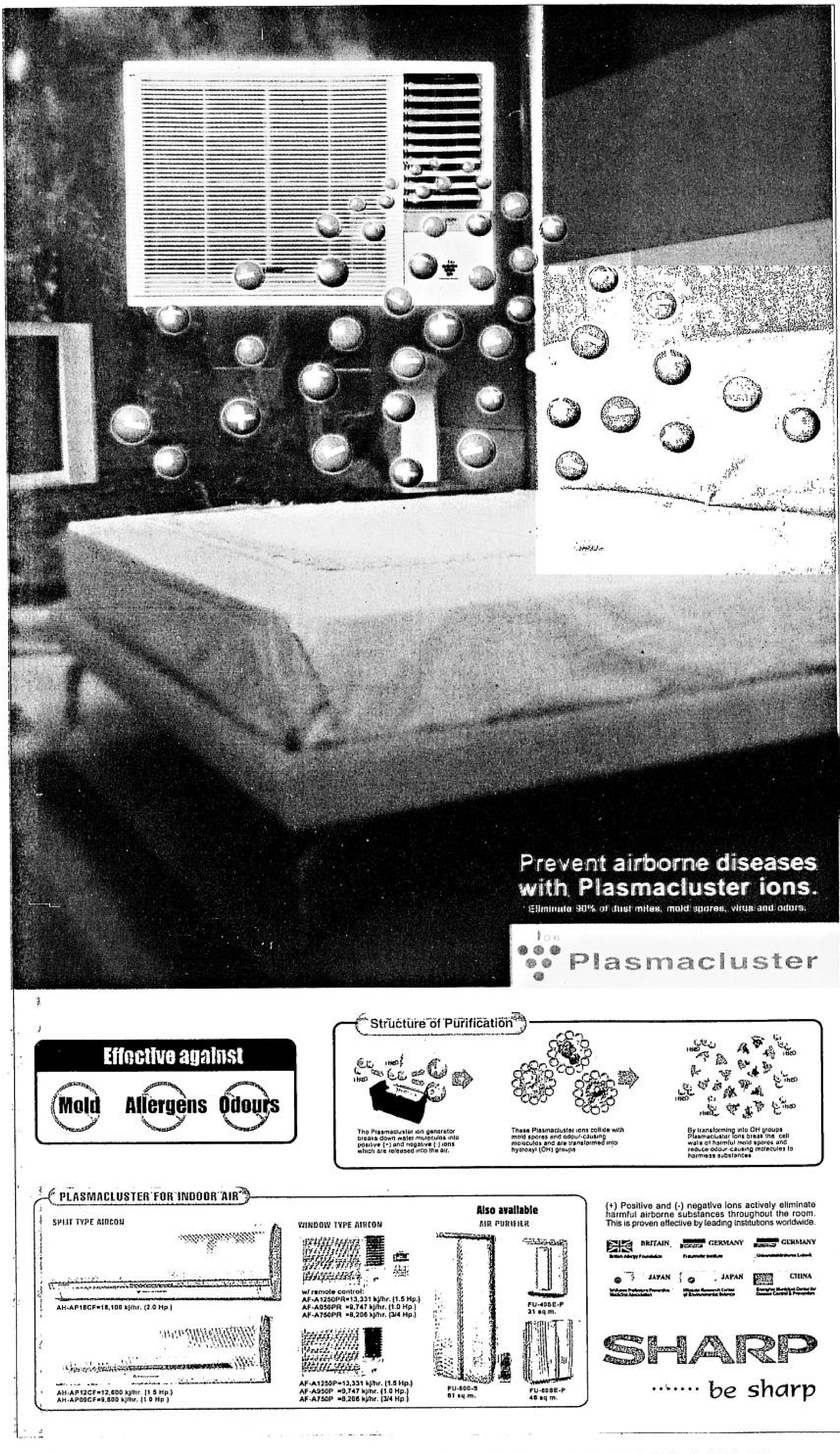

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AH-AP12CF=12,600 kj/hr. (1.5 Hp.)
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w/ remote control:
AF-A1250PR=13,331 kj/hr. (1.5 Hp.)
AF-A950PR =9,747 kj/hr. (1.0 Hp.)
AF-A750PR =8,206 kj/hr. (3/4 Hp.)

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FU-405E-P
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FU-605E-P
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Palace cheers Erap visit to ma

MALACAÑANG yesterday cheered the Sandiganbayan for allowing Joseph Estrada to visit his mother at the San Juan Medical Center.

"We're happy that former President Estrada was granted permission by the Sandiganbayan to visit his ailing mother," Ignacio Bunye, spokesperson for President Macapagal-Arroyo, told reporters at a briefing. "This would be consistent with the posture of the President to extend humane treatment to the former President."

Bunye denied that Malacañang had influenced the anti-graft court's decision in granting Estrada a 36-hour pass to gain support from his supporters for Ms Macapagal's bid for a six-year term.

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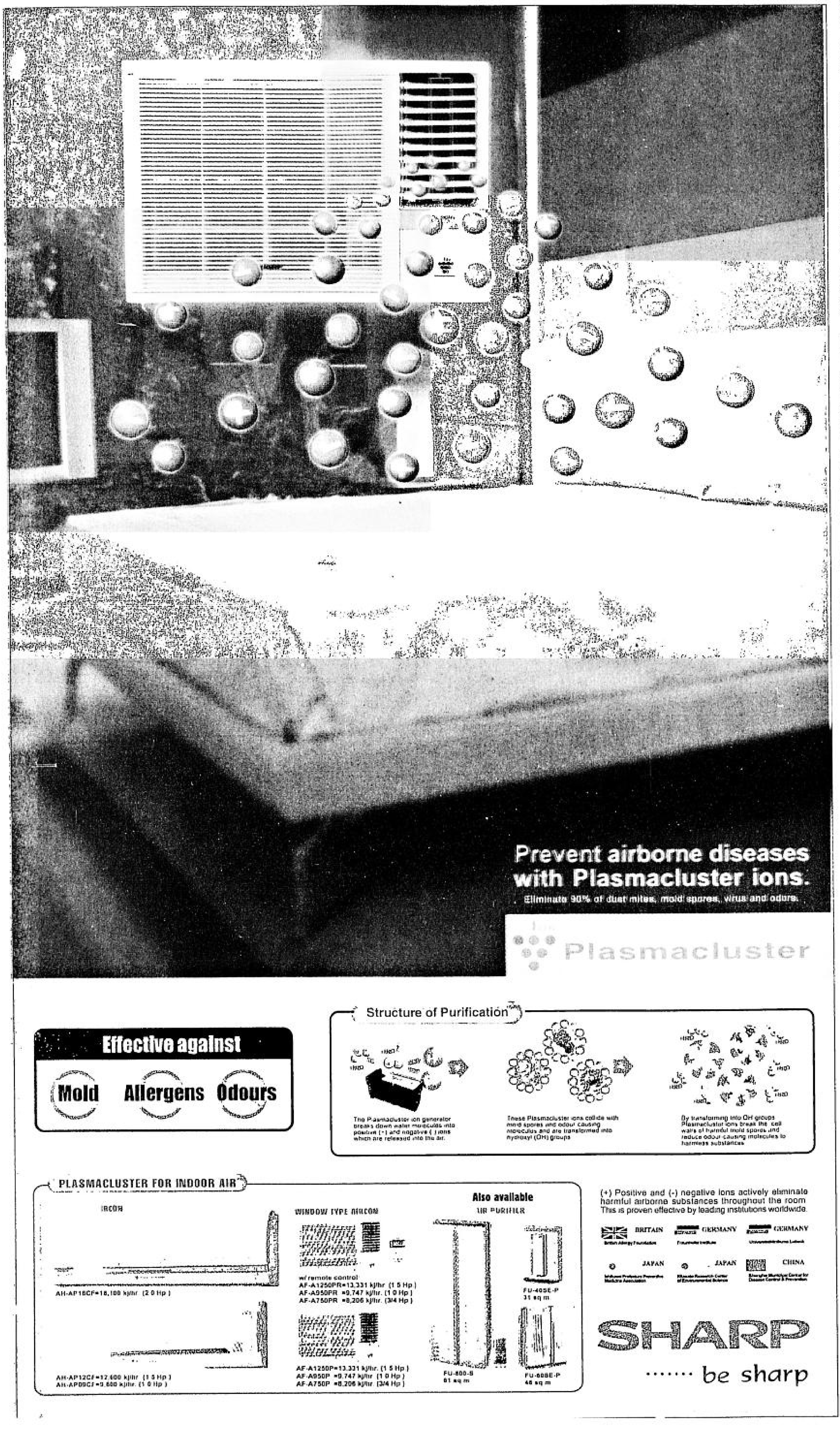

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Metro Muslims to be issued IDs

By Christian Esguerra

MUSLIM communities in Metro Manila have volunteered to adopt an identification system for their members to help the government root out terrorism and criminality, the police disclosed yesterday.

In a meeting the other day, around 30 Muslim leaders said they would implement the system in their respective communities this week, said Director Ricardo de Leon, National Capital Regional Police Office chief.

"The proposal didn't come from us. They volunteered. That's why we're glad," he told reporters.

But Taha Basman, president of the Philippine Islamic Council and resident of Maharlika Village in Taguig, said he was not amenable to the proposal.

"There's double standard again," he told the INQUIRER. "If the ID system would be implemented, it has to cover all communities."

Basman was irked that Muslims were considered the "usual suspects" whenever there's a terrorist attack.

Based on the supposed proposal, De Leon said Muslim leaders would distribute IDs for all regular residents of their respective communities in Metro Manila.

The IDs, he said, would enable local officials to easily monitor outsiders going in and out of Muslim communities.

De Leon said leaders would regularly report to police the activities of suspicious characters in each area.

The idea came a few days after suspected Abu Sayyaf members had allegedly penetrated Metro Manila to stage terrorist attacks.

De Leon and other top police officials had denied the report, maintaining that the metropolis remained safe from terrorist activities.

Director Robert Delfin, police intelligence chief, said some reports identified a certain Abu Sulaiman as the one who had sneaked in Metro Manila.

It was not clear if he was the same Abu Sulaiman who heads a faction of the Abu Sayyaf in Mindanao.

"The report was negative," he said. "Metro Manila is safe."

CAN'T WAIT
An apparently bored graduating kindergarten student of the Assumpta Academy in Bulacan entertains himself by blowing bubbles while waiting for the rites to end.
EPA

High court spares cop who killed 11-year old

THE TRAFFIC policeman who shot and killed an 11-year-old boy whom he found flying a kite on the roof of his house has escaped the death penalty.

In a 26-page en banc decision, the Supreme Court reduced to 40 years imprisonment the death sentence meted out to PO3 Fernando Fallorina who gained notoriety in 1998 for killing Vincent Jorojoro in Project 8, Quezon City in September 1998.

The SC said the Quezon City Regional Trial Court, which sentenced Fallorina to death in January 1999, erred in appreciating "the aggravating circumstance of abuse of public position" in the case.

No abuse of authority

"There is no dispute that the appellant is a policeman and that he used his service firearm, the .45 caliber pistol, in shooting the victim. However, there is no evidence on record that (Fallorina) took advantage of his position as a policeman when he shot the victim," said the decision penned by Associate Justice Romeo Callejo Sr.

While reducing Fallorina's sentence, the high court affirmed that the lawman was guilty of murdering Vincent and ordered him to pay the boy's heirs a total of P174,174. *Philip Tubeza*

DOJ summons Destileria execs

By Philip Tubeza

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice (DOJ) has ordered Destileria Limtuaco and an ad agency to explain their controversial "kinse años" advertisements for Napoleon Brandy.

Acting Justice Secretary Ma. Merceditas Gutierrez yesterday said the DOJ already issued subpoenas against the officials of Destileria Limtuaco and its affiliates and the SLG advertising agency after child rights advocates filed a complaint against them last week.

State Prosecutor Lilian Doris Alejo told the respondents to air their side on March 23, when the DOJ conducts its preliminary investigation on the case.

Respondents

The respondents were identified as Destileria Limtuaco directors and officers Julius Limpe, Betty Limpe Ngo, Lily Limpe, Olivia Limpe-Aw, Bessie Joy Limpe, Pastor G. Bustos and Lourdes Galang as well as the officers of Convoy Marketing Corp., Limtuaco's affiliate.

SLG ad agency officers Romy Singson and Jake Tadena were also included in the complaint.

In their three-page joint complaint affidavit, lawyer Katrina Legarda, activist Maria Isabel Ongpin, Eric Mallonga, Ray Salvosa, and Minerva Ambrosio said the respondents violated the Revised Penal Code and the law against child abuse and exploitation with the billboard ads.

The billboard ads, erected on the corner of Edsa and East Avenue in Quezon City and along Roxas Boulevard in Parañaque, ask in Filipino: "Have you ever tried a 15-year-old."

Little Joko needs your help

HE WAS a lively, healthy 6-year-old boy, but an accident changed that.

After getting hit by a passenger jeepney in December, Joko Borje was diagnosed with Urosepsis with Peri-renal abscess, a disease in the genitourinary tract accompanied by pus.

According to his mother, Sarah Jane, the boy was playing near their house in Western Bicutan, Taguig, when he met the accident.

Doctors at the Philippine General Hospital cut an opening on his abdomen and inserted a tube to drain the pus.

Now, Joko needs another operation to remove the tube. But his family could not afford the cost of the procedure.

His father, who works as a jeepney barker, could not even buy his medicine.

His mother said the boy had been experiencing pain because of the tube and had not been able to do what other children do.

Interested donors can reach them a 19 Kamalunggay St. Western Bicutan, Taguig, Metro Manila, or through cellphone number (0920)-2451815. *Jocelyn Uy*

Fighting over religions is foolish

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

HOW foolish can some people get when it comes to religion.

Local evangelist Eliseo Soriano filed criminal charges against an Iglesia ni Cristo minister, Michael Sandoval, after the latter scratched his palm after they shook hands.

The incident reportedly happened when the two met outside the courtroom where Soriano was to have attended a court case filed by Sandoval against him. The case is for libel.

The two Protestant ministers have been trading barbs over differences in their religious beliefs.

Susmaryosep, para kayong mga bata, Reverends! It's a surprise why your followers continue to believe in you when you're acting like little children.

* * *

Why should people fight over religion? It's foolish!

The God of the Christians and the Jews is the God of the Muslims, the Hindus and Buddhists, as well as those who worship the stars and animals. We all come from the same Source.

We should all respect one another's religious beliefs. After all, we worship the same Deity.

* * *

Some religions teach that God is jealous, wrathful and vindictive. If you don't obey His commandments, He'll banish you to eternal fire in hell.

What's wrong with these religions is that they make God a petty Deity who is capable of being jealous, wrathful and vindictive.

The same religions also teach that God is all-merciful, especially toward sinners.

If God is all-merciful, why would he send us sinners to the smoldering fires of hell? Aren't these religions contradicting themselves?

And, pray tell, why would a soul suffer from the fires of hell when it no longer has sensations of the physical body?

* * *

It's beyond me why some people, especially those belonging to the so-called civil society, are frothing at the mouth over the compassionate treatment of former President Estrada by the administration.

So what if he's allowed the amenities of modern living while in detention? So what he's allowed to visit his ailing old mother? So what if he's given a VIP treatment?

Have these guys forgotten that Erap is a former head of state? His former status gives him the privilege of a VIP treatment in detention.

Remember, Erap has not been convicted yet. Under the law, an accused is considered innocent until found guilty by the court.

So, if Erap is considered innocent since he has not been convicted yet, why deny him the privilege of a VIP treatment that he deserves as a former President?

This is not a plug for Erap, this is a commentary on our society that calls itself "Christian" and "Civil."

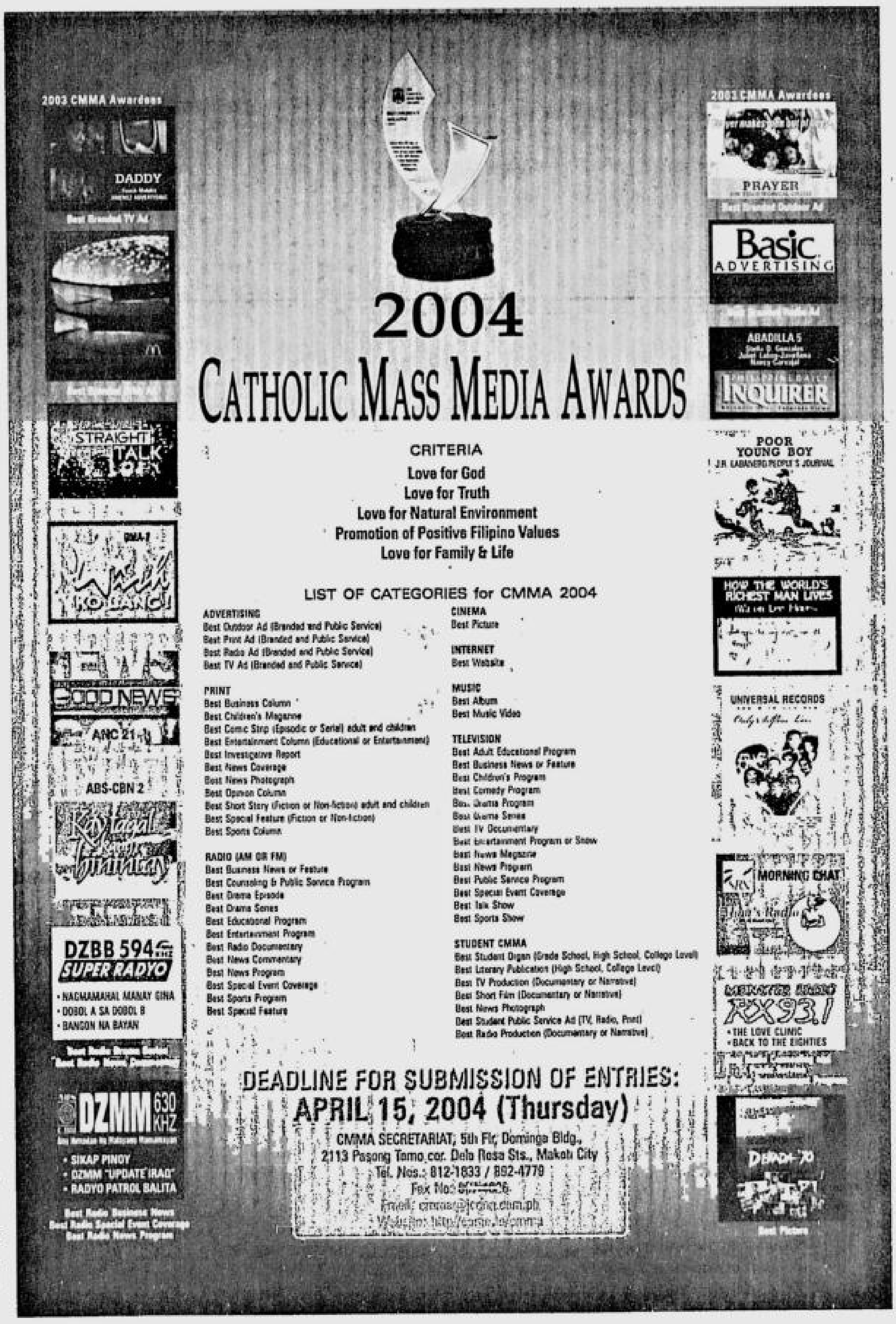
* * *

The Sandiganbayan executive accused of molesting his housemaid has been cleared of rape.

The rapist most probably paid off the poor maid.

First, he used power over the maid. Then, he used money.

Shame on you! Even if you've been cleared, the Sandiganbayan should still dismiss you.



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Love for Truth
Love for Natural Environment
Promotion of Positive Filipino Values
Love for Family & Life

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Best Outdoor Ad (Branded and Public Service)
Best Print Ad (Branded and Public Service)
Best Radio Ad (Branded and Public Service)
Best TV Ad (Branded and Public Service)

PRINT
Best Business Column
Best Children's Magazine
Best Comic Strip (Episodic or Serial) adult and children
Best Entertainment Column (Educational or Entertainment)
Best Investigative Report
Best News Coverage
Best News Photograph
Best Opinion Column
Best Short Story (Fiction or Non-fiction) adult and children
Best Special Feature (Fiction or Non-fiction)
Best Sports Column

RADIO (AM OR FM)
Best Business News or Feature
Best Counseling & Public Service Program
Best Drama Episode
Best Drama Series
Best Educational Program
Best Entertainment Program
Best Radio Documentary
Best News Commentary
Best News Program
Best Special Event Coverage
Best Sports Program
Best Special Feature

CINEMA
Best Picture

INTERNET
Best Website

MUSIC
Best Album
Best Music Video

TELEVISION
Best Adult Educational Program
Best Business News or Feature
Best Children's Program
Best Comedy Program
Best Drama Program
Best Drama Series
Best TV Documentary
Best Entertainment Program or Show
Best News Magazine
Best News Program
Best Public Service Program
Best Special Event Coverage
Best Talk Show
Best Sports Show

STUDENT CMMA
Best Student Organ (Grade School, High School, College Level)
Best Literary Publication (High School, College Level)
Best TV Production (Documentary or Narrative)
Best Short Film (Documentary or Narrative)
Best News Photograph
Best Student Public Service Ad (TV, Radio, Print)
Best Radio Production (Documentary or Narrative)

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES:
APRIL 15, 2004 (Thursday)

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25%	248 750	64,886	44,539	34,722	24,960	20,141	17,761
30%	298,500	60,468	41,504	32,355	23,261	18,769	16,550
35%	348,250	56,046	38,471	29,990	21,560	17,398	15,341
40%	398,000	51,631	35,435	27,626	19,860	16,024	14,131
45%	447,750	47,209	32,400	25,260	18,160	14,653	12,921
50%	497,500	41,458*	29,369	22,895	16,459	13,281	11,711

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E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

FOUR DIGIT
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(In exact order)

SUERTRES
0 1 0

MEGALOTTO 6/45
4 6 20 24 26 45

Bus, jeepney groups link up for strike

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

JEEPNEY drivers will join the nationwide transport strike planned by public bus groups next week, the leaders of two major jeepney organizations said yesterday.

Claire de la Fuente, president of the Integrated Metro Bus Operators Association (Imboa), reiterated the plan of major bus organizations to stop plying their routes next week.

She said all major provincial and Metro Manila bus operators would be participating in the transport holiday as an act of protest after the government junked their request for a provisional P1 increase in fares.

Surprise

De la Fuente, however, refused to disclose details of the strike echoing earlier pronouncements by leaders of the bus groups that they wanted to surprise the government with their mass action.

Earlier, it was reported that leaders of the bus groups had set the strike for Monday, to be participated in by 16,000 buses.

This developed as Mar Garvida, president of the Pinag-isang Samahan ng Tsuper at Operators Nationwide (Piston), told the INQUIRER that they would join the bus strike.

"We are just waiting for the date," he said, adding, "We have no other choice."

Efren de Luna, president of the Philippine Confederation of Drivers and Operators-Alliance of Concerned Transport Organizations (PCDO-ACTO), said they would be meeting with leaders of other jeepney groups to decide whether to participate in the mass action or not.

Bus operators are seeking a P2 increase for the first five kilometers while jeepney operators are demanding P1.50.

P18 per liter

The last time transport fares were increased was in October 2000 when the price of diesel was P14.23 per liter and gasoline was between P8.05 and P18.60.

Currently, diesel sells for about P18.00 per liter.

Transport group leaders agreed to have the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) study their petitions but demanded for a P1 provisional hike in the meantime.

On Tuesday, the LTFRB "held in abeyance" its decision on the petitions and virtually threw out any provisional increase in fares.

Officials from the Department of Transportation and Communication met with representatives of the transport groups yesterday in a move to avert a disruption in the transport system.

The National Capital Regional Police Office said it was ready for the protest action.

It directed the five police offices in Metro Manila to increase police visibility to protect drivers that would not participate in the strike. Security is also being prepared for government vehicles that would ferry standed passngers.

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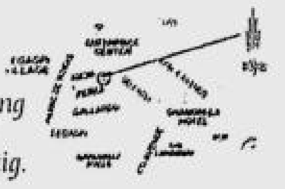

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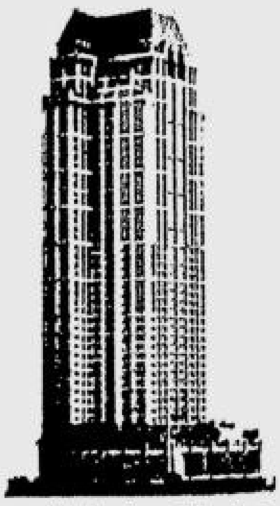

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Appeals court upholds ruling vs Ace Vergel

By Philip Tubeza

THE COURT of Appeals (CA) has affirmed the conviction of action star Ace Vergel on charges of illegal drug possession in 1995.

In a 17-page decision, the Appelate Court's Ninth Division affirmed the Quezon City Regional Trial Court's ruling that sentenced Vergel (Ace York Aguilar in real life) to four months to four years in prison for the illegal possession of 39.49 grams of shabu and to two months to two years in prison for illegal possession of marijuana.

VERGEL

The CA dismissed the actor's defense that National Bureau of Investigation agents "planted" the evidence against him.

Vergel had admitted that he was a drug-user but added that he had "reformed" since it was his mother's dying wish.

State prosecutor Philipp I. Kimpo successfully handled the case.

The decision penned by Associate Justice Eliezer de los Santos said that Vergel failed to support his claims against the NBI agents who arrested him.

The case started after NBI agents, led by lawyer Manuel Espartero, raided the actor's house at 9 Atok St., Banawe, Quezon City on Sept. 22, 1995.

The NBI raided Vergel's house on a tip from his former housemaid Flordeliza Sumayan, who also claimed that the actor forced her to sniff shabu on Sept. 15, 1995.

Sumayan added that the actor then raped her.

Vergel said a lower court had dismissed Sumayan's rape charges.

Atienza wants vendors under mayors' control

By Tarra Quismundo

A TUG-OF-WAR is looming between the National Capital Regional Police Office (NCRPO) and Metro Manila mayors over control of sidewalk vendors.

Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza Jr. dissented yesterday with the assertion of the NCRPO that it would be taking over the task of organizing street vendors in Metro Manila.

"I disagree with that. It would only lead to tong collection," said Atienza, referring to grease money that policemen allegedly collect from street vendors in exchange for the permit to sell on sidewalks.

Atienza, in a phone interview, said police control over street vendors "would aggravate the problem."

Instead, he said, the local governments must be in charge of organizing vendors and "mayors must be made responsible and accountable for their constituents."

The job of organizing vendors was left vacant after Metropolitan Manila Development Authority chair Bayani Fernando gave up his aggressive anti-sidewalk vending policy.

"His withdrawal to me is an acceptance of what we have been saying. An iron fist strategy would not work without offering any alternative (to vendors)," said Atienza.

A number of Metro Manila mayors had opposed the strong-handed drive of the MMDA, which has successfully cleared vital streets and roadways of obstruction.

But Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay said, "MMDA personnel were like executioners and fascists on the streets" as he insisted that the mayors should be the ones to regulate vendors.

SPORTS

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Try again, Dayrit tells six NSAs

By Marc Anthony Reyes

ALL is not lost for the six national sports associations whose events have been excluded from the 2005 Southeast Asian Games calendar.

But here's the catch: these NSAs will have to campaign hard for the inclusion of their sports.

Philippine Olympic Committee president Celso Dayrit yesterday met with representatives of the six excluded NSAs and gave them something to hope for when the SEAG Federation council meets again in Manila in October.

POC secretary general Romy Ribaño (squash), among those who attended the meeting, said Dayrit told them "there is still hope in the second round of the meeting."

Also present in the deliberation were officials from lawn bowl, body building and muay thai.

If the six sports indeed make it to the final SEA Games list, it would swell the number of sports to 40, the most to be played in the Games history. The most sports disciplines played in the biennial meet was 35 in the 1997 edition of the Games in Jakarta.

But Ribaño said organizers just might pull it off for as long as they reduce the number of sporting events to the minimum.

Ribaño added that the six NSA chiefs must emulate Cambodia, which launched a campaign blitz for the inclusion of petanque.

One factor that went against the country's choice of sports, according to Ribaño, was the decision by the SEAG Federation to implement two new rules starting in the 2005 edition.

That includes the limiting of all sports (excluding athletics, aquatics and shooting) to a number of events no more than 5 percent of the total gold medals staked.

For example, if the total number of gold medals to be contested is 400, each sport concerned must not have more than 20 events each.

Also, the host country can't introduce "artificial events" or those not traditionally played in the Olympics.

Tennis president Buddy Andrada, who was most vocal in denouncing Dayrit for his failure to help his event to be included in the 2005 calendar, did not attend yesterday's meeting.

He was represented by national coach Johnny Jose.

Weightlifting president Monico Puentevella was also absent.

BONG LOPEZ

ROSALES rallies with a five-under 67.

3 OFF THE PACE

Jenny bucks hurting wrist, ties for 2nd

JENNY Rosales was just as good as Annika Sorenstam and Se Ri Pak, and definitely better than Michelle Wie, yesterday in the opening round of the Safeway International Superstition tournament at the Mountain Golf Club course in Phoenix, Arizona.

But Kim Saiki, never a winner in 12 years on the LPGA Tour, was simply the best with her career-low 8-under 64 giving her a three-shot lead.

Boosted by three birdies on a four-hole stretch from the 12th, Rosales fired a five-under 67 to join Sorenstam, defending champion Pak, Mi Hyun Kim and Donna Andrews in second place, three shots behind the solo leader.

Jenny's stint in the tournament, however, remains a big question mark as the pain in her fragile right wrist just wouldn't go away. At one point, she went to the power of the prayer in her desire to finish her round.

She almost quit midway in the round when, after hitting her second shot from the fairway bunker, she felt something snap in her wrist and the club came off her grip. Jenny firmly held her wrist as she slumped on the ground.

"She really thought that she wouldn't be able to finish her round anymore because of the pain. She told me she prayed a little and asked God to help her finish the round because she was playing well," said her swing coach, Bong Lopez.

Soon after, the endorser of Bally, PLDT Global and American Eye Center birdied the next hole from two feet and, after a par on the 13th, also birdied back to back from the 14th.

Lopez said that with the condition of Jenny's wrist, everyday is a wait-and-see situation: "It all depends on what she feels when she warms up. If she feels something, she may have no option but to quit."

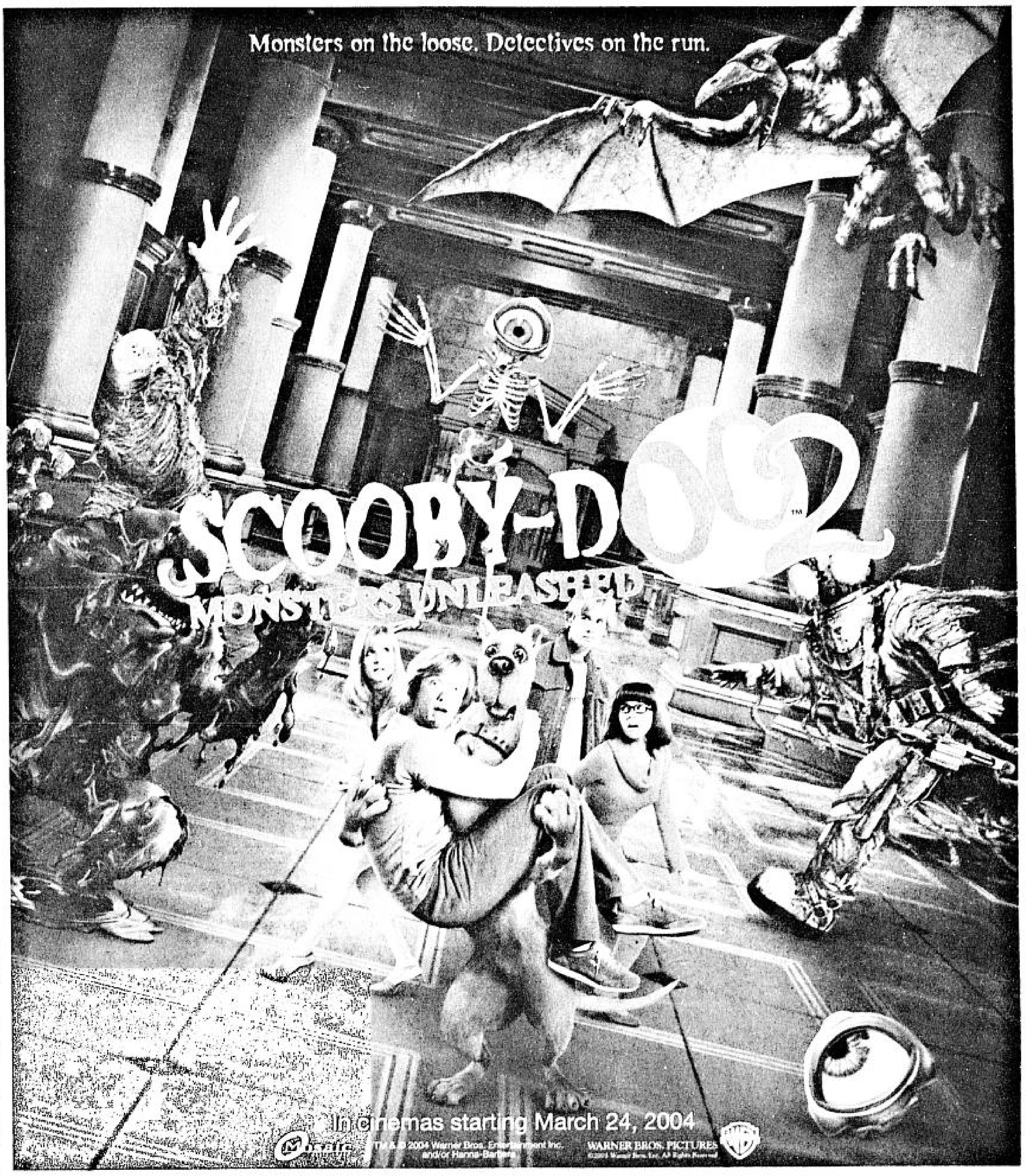
Rosales had quit after the first round of last week's Welch's/Fry's Championship because of the wrist injury.

A huge throng followed Wie, the 6-foot, 14-year-old despite temperatures topping 90 degrees. They agonized as Wie, making the first of six LPGA starts this year, shot an even-par 72 that could easily have been a 69. *Jong Arcano*

Caging superbody invites BAP to talks

THE BASKETBALL superbody yesterday agreed to create a covenant that would spell out the basic principles of the organization even as it sent an invitation urging the Basketball Association of the Philippines to join another round of talks next week.

Commissioner Noli Eala of the PBA said the PBL led by commissioner Chino Trinidad had volunteered to craft a blueprint of the covenant which would be submitted to the stakeholders for comment. *June Navarro*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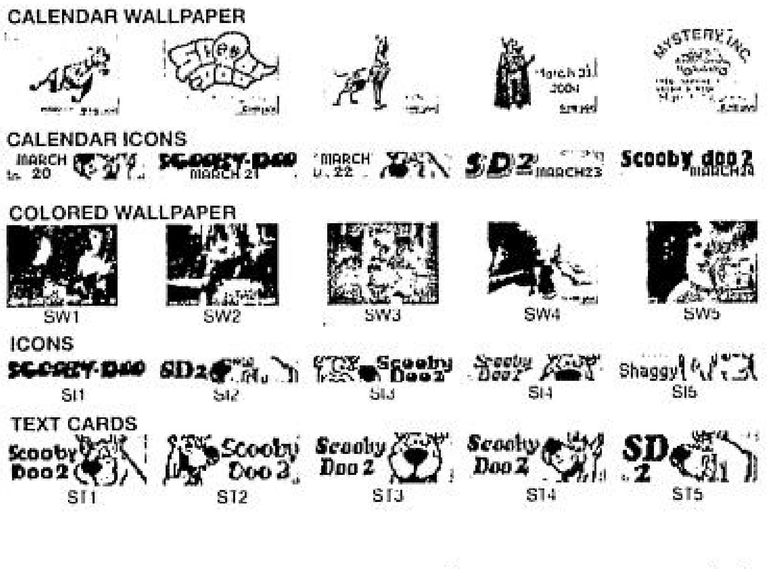

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3 GMs, Dableo banner strong RP bid

WITH three grandmasters and an Asian Zonal champion in its lineup, the Philippines' Tagaytay team looms as the prohibitive favorite to rule the Asian Cities Chess Team Championship starting tomorrow at the new International Convention Center in Tagaytay City.

Asia's first grandmaster Eugene Torre, fellow GMs Joey Antonio and Bong Villamayor as well as GM-candidate and Zonal titlist Ronald Dableo and IM Jayson Gonzales banner the powerful Tagaytay squad seeking the Dubai Cup in the tournament featuring 19 teams from 15 countries.

Defending champion Pavlodar of Kazakhstan is also fielding a GM-laden team and stands as Tagaytay's biggest rival in the event never before won by any Philippine team.

Mandaluyong, powered by the country's most-bemedalled player in the Vietnam Southeast Asian Games, IM Mark Paragua, Pasay and Tanauan are the three other RP squads entered in the nine-round Swiss system tournament.

Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain, Tagaytay Mayor Francis N. Tolentino, World Chess Federation honorary president Florencio Campomanes and National Chess Federation Board members headed by chair Andres Gatmaitan and president Mat Defensor are among the guests at tomorrow's opening ceremonies.

Project director Casto Abundo said most of the foreign teams will arrive today, including tough squads from Guangzhou (China) and Jakarta (Indonesia).

The other competing teams are Sydney (Australia), Bandar Seri Begawan (Brunei), Hong Kong, Kanchipuram (India), Samarinda (Indonesia), Teheran (Iran), Doha (Qatar), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam), Macau, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and Sana'a (Yemen).

Aside from Paragua, Mandaluyong is fielding IMs Nelson Mariano, Ildefonso Datu and Richard Bitoon as well as NM Rolly Martinez.

Pasay City is composed of IM Barlo Nadera, NM Emmanuel Senador, Jerome Balico, Rodolfo Panopio and Oliver Dimakiling, while Tanauan is made up of IM Fernie Donguines, NM Teodulfo Nones, Efren Arguelles, Jennifer Mayor and Gabriel Leyesa.

With a report from Marlon Bernardino

Ali in Pacquiao's mind

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

IN 1998, Muhammad Ali told book author Lorne A. Adrian: "The most important thing I know about the spirit of sport is that one has to be fit both in body and mind. Whether it's boxing, basketball, or badminton, one must be ready to succeed before entering the arena…long before the lights come up.

" I couldn't agree more.

You first succeed in the mind before you succeed in the battlefield.

You need to have the "movie in your mind" before you embark on your dream.

You need to visualize the totality of your swing before you hit a golf shot.

Preparation has always been the key to victory, whether in sports or in life.

Napoleon Bonaparte had won almost all his battles because he always fought well prepared. One key to his preparation was the art of taking naps on board his horse while on his way to battle. Once in combat, he was as fresh as a daisy, as strong as an ox.

I guess Erap idolizes Napoleon. Erap has advised his bosom buddy, the presidential bet FPJ, to be, in a way, like Napoleon.

"Take a lot of rest. Have plenty of sleep," Erap has counseled Da King, GMA's toughest foe in the May 10 polls. "You are in for a long, difficult war."

Even Tito Guingona, the durable lawmaker, has added an invaluable tip to FPJ's preparation for the fight of his life: Make each of your speeches more than 7 minutes long.

Even GMA's preparation in her a mano a mano with FPJ has taken a new dimension: Make that smile a Mona Lisa smile. In short, you need to smile more, Ate Glo. Historically, the *masa* have always adored a smiling President.

Preparation has always been 50 percent of a mission.

To prepare for a championship, a good basketball coach begins by assembling the right mix of players. My son, Dayong, a firm believer of Joe Lipa's brand of coaching, keeps telling people who cared to listen: Good coaching begins with good recruiting.

Manny Pacquiao may not be aware of it but the manner with which he prepares for his fights has a striking resemblance to that of Muhammad Ali's style.

Like Ali, Pacquiao would isolate himself from people close to him and lead a hermit-like life while preparing for a fight.

The power puncher from General Santos City has left for the States on Friday to prepare for a fight against a Mexican touted as "more dangerous" than Barrera, whom Pacquiao had stopped in 11 rounds in a bout last November that nobody believed Pacquiao would win except me and Pacquiao's mother.

Ali did the same when he fought both George Foreman in Kinshasha, Zaire, in 1974 and Joe Fraizer in Manila in 1975. In both fights, Ali flew ahead of his opponents to Kinshasha and Manila, training for each bout for almost two months.

Pacquiao will not spend two months this time preparing against Marquez, the self-proclaimed avenger of Barrera. This early, many are again predicting Pacquiao will be the underdog in that his "lack of preparation" could end up disastrously for the guy now generally regarded as the best 126-pounder in the world.

But knowing Pacquiao, he will again have that "movie in my mind" script when he meets Marquez on May 8 in Las Vegas.

Like the Ali of old, Pacquiao will be fit "both in body and mind" long before "the lights come up" on May 8.

To a fighter in the caliber of Pacquiao, it's not just about being "ready to succeed" as Ali put it, it's also about being comfortable thinking about success even before the first bell has been rung.

I don't know if Pacquiao knows it but I'm sure Ali, given his braggadocio, knew what it was to be considered the greatest fighter of all time. From that moment when he knocked out then heavily favored Sonny Liston in 1963 to become the new world heavyweight champion, Ali knew greatness was not far behind.

If Pacquiao, a self-confessed billiards addict, would want to follow in the footsteps of Ali, he should heed Ali's boxing credo: Prepare or be peppered.

One can't be a boxer and a billiards player all at the same time.

***

FASTBREAK. My deepest gratitude to Dr. Victor K. Gozali (surgeon), Dr. Imelda S. Estrellas (anesthesiologist), Dr. Jane Gaston (endocrinologist) and my golf buddy, the eminent Dr. Jose Oreta, for the wonderful teamwork they had exhibited when a dear friend of mine went under the knife on Friday at St. Luke's. May your tribe increase.

SAMSUNG AMATEUR

It's Pagunsan after a birdie homeward run

PAGUNSAN: Big winner

BATANGAS—It took just six holes for Juvic Pagunsan to show who's the boss.

Pagunsan gunned down four birdies in a six-hole stretch from the 13th, closed out with a five-under-par 67 and, as expected, ran away with the men's division crown yesterday in the second Samsung Amateur Tour golf championships at the challenging Mt. Malarayat Golf and Country Club course here.

First round co-leader Mark Lopez and Jay Bayron kept themselves in step with Pagunsan through the first nine holes until the Philippine Open runner-up stormed ahead with three straight birdies from the 13th, parred the 16th then buried a 10-footer on the 17th.

When the smoke of the birdie explosion cleared, Pagunsan had turned a one-stroke deficit into a whopping six-stroke victory over Bayron and Lopez with his 140 total.

Bayron and Lopez carded 72 and 74, respectively to share second place at 146.

Gene Bondoc, co-leader with Lopez on Thursday, soared to a 77 and landed fourth at 149. Bacolod's JR Tanpinco also matched par 72 for 152, Cebu's Jovy Neri shot a 77-153, Tristan Tabanas had a 74-154 and Ronnie Torrecampo 75-155.

Carmelette Villaroman crowned herself the new ladies Class A champion but not after foiling an astonishing comeback by Anya Tanpinco.

Villaroman's birdie from three feet on the 18th spoiled Tanpinco's bid to forge a playoff after coming from four shots behind with three to go with a birdie-par-birdie run.

Villaroman matched par 72 for the second straight day and posted a 36-hole total of 143. Tanpinco, sister of JR, submitted a one-under 71 for 145 while Remijin Camping, the defending champion who was tied with Villaroman in Round 1, settled for third at 146 after a 75.

The winners of the event, which assembled all the champions of a nationwide tour, all won C100 cellular phones from Samsung.

Pagunsan, the Baguio stop winner, was also invited to play in the ongoing The Country Club Invitational but turned it down in favor of an earlier commitment to PSMG head Boy Blue Ocampo.

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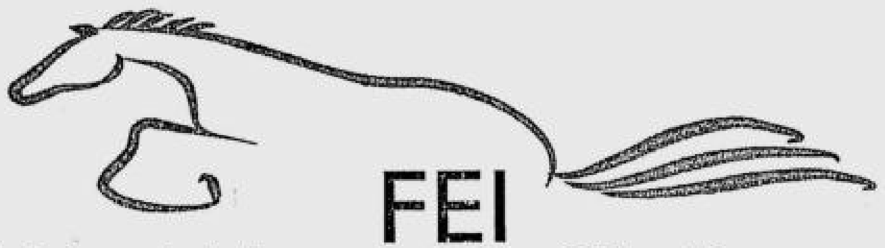

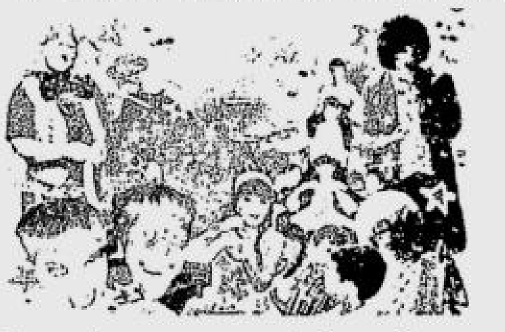

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40 Vis-Min cagers make final tryouts

AN OPPORTUNITY to gain a slot in the men's or youth national training pool will be the incentive for the close to 40 players from the Visayas and Mindanao who have been invited to attend the final regional tryout of the ongoing Cebuana Lhuillier Tryouts ng Bayan.

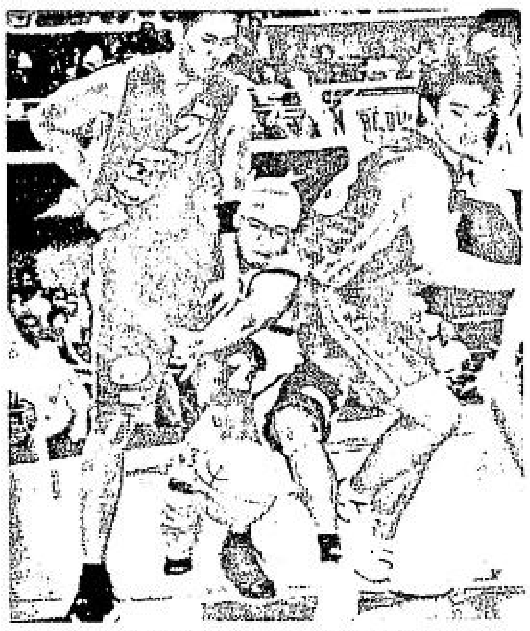
The three-day tryout starting today at the Lamberto Macias Sports Center in Dumaguete City features players chosen from Davao City, Cagayan de Oro, Bacolod, Iloilo, Tacloban, Cebu and the host city where the RP coaching staff, led by Dong Vergeire and Boyzie Zamar, had conducted tryouts for over a month.

The players will be divided into two teams to be coached by Vergeire and Zamar. They will play two games to allow the coaching staff to gauge their capabilities before choosing those who will be brought to Manila for the final tryouts.

RP team manager Jean Henri Lhuillier said the warm response to the national tryouts was a positive sign toward the eventual integrated program for amateur basketball development in the country.

"We expect to get at least 8-10 players from Visayas and Mindanao, not including those under-20 players who may be drafted for the youth and under-20 pool as we have been coordinating with the other coaches regarding the matter," explained Vergeire.

It's new coach, new hope as Gin Kings face Barakos



MARK Caguioa of Ginebra shows tremendous spunk fighting a double screen by Kirby Raymundo (left) and James Yap of Purefoods. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

IT'S A BIT hard, swears new Barangay Ginebra coach Bethune "Siot" Tanquincen who gets his baptism of fire when they face a Red Bull team that may show up with no import today in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Ynares Center in Antipolo City.

"There's a lot of pressure, and it's a bit hard, because expectations are quite high, especially from the fans. In a way, I'm worried about it," said Tanquincen, who has been tapped to replace Allan Caidic as Ginebra chief tactician.

Although the Barakos (2-2) are still in search of an import, Tanquincen believes his Gin Kings (3-2) will still have their hands full.

Doug Wrenn, the Barakos' third import in the conference, injured his foot against San Miguel Beer, thus forcing him to book a ticket back to the United States.

The Barakos are reportedly thinking it over thoroughly before hiring either DeAngelo Collins or Jaja Wilson.

"If no import arrives, we'll just have to play all-Filipino," said Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao in a text message.

Fanatics of both Ginebra and Red Bull had several skirmishes in the past and, on one occasion, came to blows with one fan landing in the hospital.

In the other game, the Shell Turbochargers (1-4) and the FedEx Express (0-4) aim to check their losing records with Marek Ondera expected to suit up for the Turbochargers after recuperating from an ankle injury.

Ondera will be ranged against FedEx's Mike Maddux, who replaced the 6-foot-8 Alvin Jefferson due to a mediocre four-game stint.

STANDINGS	W	L
San Miguel	5	0
Talk 'N Text	4	1
Red Bull	4	1
Ginebra	3	2
Coke	3	2
Red Bull	2	2
Purefoods	2	3
Shell	1	4
FedEx	0	4
Sta. Lucia	0	5

GAMES TODAY
(Ynares Center)
4:10 p.m.—FedEx vs Shell
6:30 p.m.—Red Bull vs Ginebra

Champ Vita in do-or-die match

DEFENDING titlist Johnson Vita gets a chance to redeem himself against veteran Florencio Banar today in the rematch of the Search for Tanduay the No. 1 Billiards Player at the Robinson's Galleria.

Vita, who was installed into the Tanduay Hall of Fame last week, found himself in a tough situation and lost to Banar, 2-5, thus forcing a do-or-die match in this event sponsored by Tanduay the No. 1 Rhum, Robinson's Malls, Accel, Hope The Luxury Cigarettes and Rommel's Billiards, the official table.

The match will be aired over the National Broadcasting Network 8-9 tonight on prime time, with the exciting blow-by-blow delivered by Danny Romero and Recah Trinidad.

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Top driver tilt flags off today

THE C! TOP Driver Challenge 2004 flags off at 1 p.m. today with its elimination phase and finals at the Timezone in Glorietta 4 in Makati.

The challenge, organized by the Tuason Racing School (TRS) and sponsored by Ford, Addict Mobile, Standard Insurance, Goodyear, Petron, Octane Racewear, Ambi Pur Car, Oakley, K&N filters, H&R suspension systems, Racegear, Options Unlimited, Brother's Burgers, C! Magazine, Trapik.com and Motorista.com.ph, pits participants in a series of contests wherein only the top qualifiers will advance through four progressively difficult legs.

The event is open to everyone 17 years old and above. For inquiries, call TRS at 531-2962.

Dance meet starts

SOME 100 dance couples are seeing action in the 2004 DSCP (Dancesport Council of the Philippines) First Quarter Ranking and Competitions at 11 a.m. today at the Philsports Arena in Pasig City.

DSCP president Becky Garcia said entries will be strutting their stuff in the juvenile, junior, youth, Grade A-E, Special events 1 and 2 and senior category of both the Standard and Latin divisions.

John Erolle Melencio and Dearlie Gerodias and Luis Miguel III and Luzviminda Artuz are among those competing in the event.

Araneta Center

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX	
Ali 3	HIDALGO
Ali 4	50 FIRST DATES
Ali 5	TORQUE
Ali 6	THE CURSE
Ali 7	OTSO OTSO

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MAR 31	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
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THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	BALAT SIBUYAS / AMBISYOSA
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	OTSO OTSO
B	PEEP SHOW
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	MILAN
CINEMA-2	LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO
CINEMA-3	DRAGON VS NINJA
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	CARMEN
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	KUYA
CINEMA-6	U-BELT
CINEMA-7	COLD MOUNTAIN
CINEMA-8	ANNIE B
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	TORQUE
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	HIDALGO
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
CINEMA-12	LOVE ACTUALLY
CINEMA-14	GOTHIKA
CINEMA-15	GRUDGE 2
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PIÑAS)	RUNAWAY JURY
CINEMA-1	ANNIE B
CINEMA-2	COLD MOUNTAIN
CINEMA-4	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PAHANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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CINEMA 2 — **50 FIRST DATES** 11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 10:00 **P13**

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1 **THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT** 12:30, 3:05, 5:40, 8:15, 10:50 R-13

2 **CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN** 11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 9:50 GP

3 **50 FIRST DATES** 11:35, 1:50, 4:05, 6:20, 8:35, 10:50 R-18

4 **OTSO-OTSO** 12:20, 2:40, 5:00, 7:20, 9:40 PG-13

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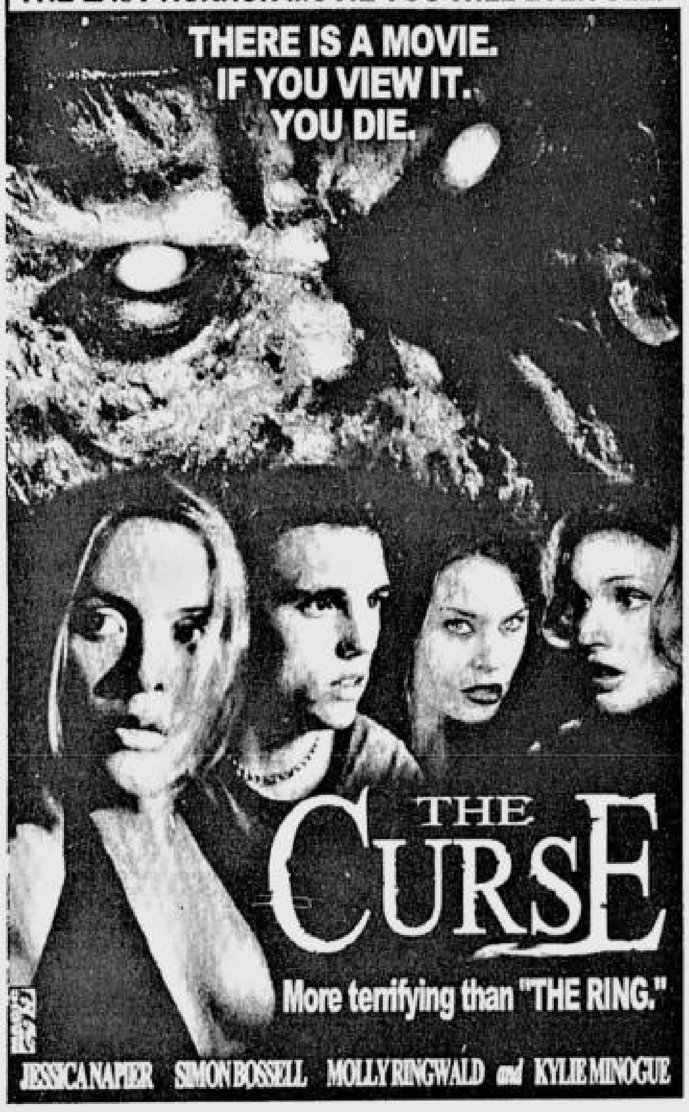

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CINEMA 1 THX — **HIDALGO** 12:00, 2:45, 5:30, 8:15, 10:25

2 **THE GRUDGE 2** 10:40, 12:40, 2:40, 4:40, 6:40, 8:40, 10:25

3 **BUTTERFLY EFFECT** 11:55, 2:05, 4:15, 6:25, 8:35, 10:25

4 **50 FIRST DATES** 10.25, 12:40, 2:55, 5:10, 7.25, 9:40

5 **OTSO-OTSO** 10:35, 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50

6 **CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN** 11:55, 2:05, 4:15, 6:25, 8:35, 10:25

7 **TORQUE** 10.50, 1:00, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, 9 45

8 **LOVE ACTUALLY** 10:20, 1:10, 4:00, 6:50, 9:40

9 **THE CURSE** 10:40, 12 40, 2 40, 4 40, 6:40, 8:40, 10.25

10 **SORUM** 11:55, 2:05, 4:15, 6:25, 8:35, 10:25

MATINEE: Monday to Friday/ 10 am-4pm except holidays
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Regular Price: P130 THX / P95/65 for two levels cinemas / P95 for one level cinemas

ERMITA 526-7185 / 536-7809 to 12

1 **50 FIRST DATES** 10:15, 12:30, 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:40

2 **THE GRUDGE 2** 11:15, 1.05, 2 55, 4:45, 6:35, 8:25, 10.00

3 **HIDALGO** 11:00, 1.35, 4:10, 6 45, 9 40

4 **THE CURSE** 11:15, 1 05, 2 55, 4:45, 6:35, 8:25, 10:00

5 **LOVE ACTUALLY** 11.00, 1.40, 4 20, 5.05, 7:15, 9:40

6 **BUTTERFLY EFFECT** 11:35, 2.05, 4.35, 7.05, 9.40

7 **OTSO-OTSO** 10.15, 12.30, 2:45, 5.00, 7:15, 9.40

Big R Supercenter **METRO EAST** 682-8193/99 / 682-8280

1 **THE CURSE** 11:50, 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10

2 **50 FIRST DATES** 11:50, 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10 SDDS

3 **LOVE ACTUALLY** 12:40, 3:20, 6:00, 9:00

4 **HIDALGO** 12:00, 3.00, 6.00, 9:00

5 **CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN** 10 50, 12 50, 2 50, 4 50, 6 50, 9:00

6 **THE GRUDGE 2** 10:40, 12 40, 2 40, 4 40, 6 40, 8.40, 10.30

7 **BUTTERFLY EFFECT** 10.50, 1:25, 4:00, 6:35, 9.10

8 **OTSO-OTSO** 11:00, 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00

Big R Supercenter **NOVALICHES / FAIRVIEW** 935-3229 / 31

1 **THE GRUDGE 2** 11:25, 1:15, 3:05, 4:55, 6:45, 8:35

2 **OTSO-OTSO** 11:45, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:30

3 **BUTTERFLY EFFECT** 11.20, 1:35, 3 50, 6 05, 8 30

4 **THE CURSE** 11:25, 1 15, 3 05, 4 55, 6.45, 8 35

5 **HIDALGO** 12:05, 2 50, 5 35, 8 30

6 **TORQUE** 10.25, 12:15, 2 05, 3.55, 5:45, 7:35, 9 00

7 **50 FIRST DATES** 11:45, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:30, 10 05

8 **SORUM** 11:35, 1:40, 3:45, 5.50, 8.00

Citisquare **MALABON** 288-0985/2575
1 HIDALGO
2 OTSO-OTSO
3 50 FIRST DATES
4 CARMEN

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4 HIDALGO

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2 OTSO-OTSO
3 CARMEN
4 LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO
5 50 FIRST DATES

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2 OTSO-OTSO
3 DUPLEX
4 LOVE ACTUALLY
5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

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2 WATER DEMON
3 TORQUE
4 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
5 OTSO-OTSO

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4 MAGIC KITCHEN
5 TORQUE
6 HIDALGO
THX STANDARD

IMUS 471-8188 / 875-5858
1 HIDALGO
2 50 FIRST DATES
3 THE CURSE
4 BUTTERFLY EFFECT
5 OTSO-OTSO
6 THE GRUDGE 2

BACOLOD 441-0458/59
1 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
2 21 GRAMS
3 OTSO-OTSO
4 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
5 WATER DEMON
6 GHOST HOUSE

ILOILO 336-8070/78
1 RUNAWAY JURY
2 DUPLEX
3 OTSO-OTSO
4 DRAGON VS. NINJA
5 CARMEN
6 THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

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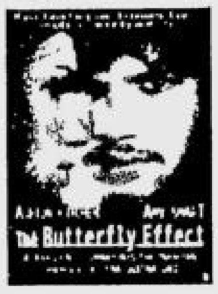

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ADVANCE SCREENING

* The PASSION of the CHRIST *
March 21 (SUNDAY)
Cinema 2 (3:00 PM)

* SCOOBY DOO 2 *
March 21 Cinema 6 (7 PM)
March 22 Cinema 6 (7:30 PM)

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Lascuña shoots 67 for 2-shot TCC lead

By Musong Castillo, *Contributor*

CANLUBANG, Laguna—Tony Lascuña was near-perfect with a three-under-par 67 yesterday to seize a two-stroke lead halfway through the P3.85 million The Country Club Invitational.

The dusky Lascuña, a runner-up last year, turned in the second of only two subpar rounds in the tournament and, together with his opening 71, posted a 138 total, two under at the exclusive par-70 The Country Club course here.

Cookie La'O, who collapsed into a three-way tie for the lead in the first round, dropped to second by matching par again for 140 on a day that saw defending champion Cassius Casas miserably miss the 36-hole cut with an 83.

It took the other 67 by Asian Tour regular Angelo Que to move him into contention at 143 in a tie with amateur Artemio Murakami, a first-round co-leader, who carded a 73 this time.

Que gained a lot of headway after starting with a 76 although he and Murakami stood five strokes off the pace.

Lascuña, the ever-smiling native of Davao, missed just one fairway and hit all but three greens to grab the initiative going into the final two rounds of the 72-hole chase for the top prize of P1.1 million.

The cut was pegged at 150 and, after a 78 on Thursday, Casas was out of it as early as his first nine.

Wild with his drives, Casas lost shots in the first three holes, gave up another two on the fifth and turned in a fat eight for a quadruple bogey on No. 9 for a 45. He also bogeyed No. 8, one of two holes converted into long par-4s.

LASCUÑA hit all but three greens.

With La'O and Murakami staying within striking distance, journeyman Ramil Bisera, the longest shot among the opening leaders, faded as expected, shooting a 79 to barely make the cut with his 149 total.

"I drove the ball well today and my putting clicked," said Lascuña in Filipino. "This is a very tough, long course which you need to play with a lot of control."

Lascuña, who tied for second last year with Benjie Magada, birdied No. 1 despite failing to reach the green with his second shot. He also picked up strokes on No. 7 and on the 475-yard, par-4 15th, after he stuck a 5-iron from 170 yards to within four feet.

La'O churned out his 70 in another roller-coaster round that had him blowing a four-under card starting on No. 9 with a three-putt from just about 12 feet. He also gave up shots on 10 and 11 with poor approaches and had another bogey on 15 from the greenside bunker.

Que strung up three birdies from the 12th and nailed another on the 161-yard par-3 16th to negate his only bogey on No. 9.

All told, a total of 12 players were within nine shots off Lascuña, including amateurs Marvin Dumandan and Buboy Jaraula, who shot 71 and 76, respectively, to be in a tie for 10th at 147.

Among the 36-hole casualties were veterans Al Cruz (151, 75-76), Edwin Estrera (152, 78-74), Antolin Fernando (152, 75-77), Carito Villaroman (158, 81-77), Ramon Brobio (163, 79-84) and pro-am champion Lito Rempojo (154, 74-80).

The Top 10 after 54 holes:

138—A. Lascuna 71-67; **140**—C. La'O 70-70; **143**—A. Que 76-67, A. Murakami (a) 70-73; **145** —B. Magada 71-74, D.Zarate 73-72; **146**—J. Delariarte 71-75, M. Pucay 74-72, M. Dizon 76-70; **147**—M. Dumandan (a) 76-71, R. Sinfuego 72-75, Rodrigo Cuello 77-70, R. Jaraula (a)71-76.

Challenging Friends

Participants of the Isuzu Challenge Series have two main things in common - they love their Isuzu vehicles and are spirited enough to take on any challenge. The experience of the Isuzu Challenge brings together the owners in a way that the bond of camaraderie is inevitable.

A snapshot of the many new barkada that formed over the last IC 2002 and IC 2003n are the group of Joel Zobel, Marvin Paghangaan and wife Zilfy Chantel, Joey Matza and wife Merlynn and brothers Ronald and Roy Aguto. They arrived as Challengers in the 2003 Manila leg and initially competed against each other for the e-drive portion. After that they came together as one team for the sports activities.

During the competition, this team clicked not just as teammates but also as friends. After the intense excitement of the Isuzu Challenge Manila leg was over, they went their separate ways and that might have been the end of it but for the fact that Marvin, Roy and Ronald met again at the National finals. They met as old friends and enjoyed each others company even though they were not teamed up together. A month after the finals it was Marvin's birthday and he texted invitations to some of his fellow challengers. To his surprise the whole group showed up and that cemented the bond.

Since then the group decided to meet once a month. February was Joel's turn to host and this March the Challengers head off to Roy's place in Batanes for an out of town experience with their families and their Isuzu's.

They come from different environments with different interests. Some from the corporate sector, some entrepreneurs and one even a Major who is a fireman but they all now share a common bond of friendship born out of owning and loving their Isuzu's.

They have garnered support from Isuzu Philippines as the group intends to form an Isuzu Owners Club and we wait to see what they cook up next as the extended Isuzu Family Goes Farther.

ADVT

ISUZU CHALLENGE 2004

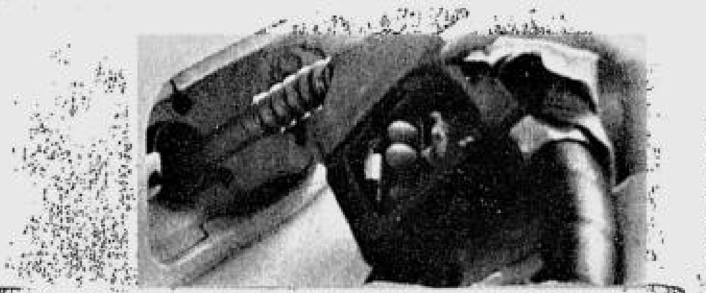
GETTING DOWN TO SERIOUS FUN

Background

What started as a mere "drive-to-measure" activity in 2000 is now one of the most anticipated motoring events in the country. The Isuzu Challenge started with a group of owners challenging themselves on how fuel efficient their Isuzu vehicles could be. The E-drive event became familiar to Isuzu owners as the ultimate test of fuel efficiency for their vehicles and themselves.

E-Drive 2000 : Let's Measure the Fuel Efficiency

The drive, which also allowed the owners to have fun and socialize, took the Isuzu vehicles and their owners from Manila to the former American airbase in Pampanga – Clarkfield. It was there where Isuzu Philippines Corporation (IPC) was able to let their owners realize that how proper driving coupled with an Isuzu engine can yield remarkable fuel efficiency results. And what better way to have fun than with an event whose learnings have applications in real life – better value for money.



Isuzu Challenge 2002 : A new Dimension of Fun

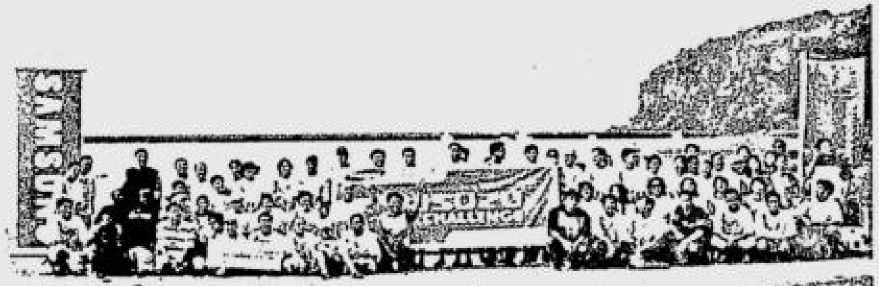
In 2002, Isuzu re-launched the E-drive with a renewed objective of not only proving the fuel efficiency of their vehicles but also giving its customers a taste of what lifestyle Isuzu owners can lead through the versatility of their vehicles. With Isuzu's "Go Farther" global slogan, Isuzu Philippines Corporation took an ordinary economy run activity to a more adventurous and free-spirited level.

For Isuzu owners, with some members of the Motoring Media, the Isuzu Challenge 2002 became the venue for fun and competition. The E-drive produced amazing results from the 50 vehicle participant convoy, as they cruised from Manila to Nasugbu, in Batangas. But, unlike, the previous E-drive,the participants were brought to a resort after the long drive for an afternoon of pure fun.

The lifestyle activities pitted the participants amongst themselves competing in various fun-activities. Mountain biking, beach volleyball, kayaking, jet skiing and even a water gun shootout made everyone tired but definitely satisfied. Many of the participants experienced these activities for the first time but the competition was fierce but friendly. Not only did the Isuzu Challenge prove the fuel efficiency of the Isuzu's but also allowed its customers to experience the "Isuzu lifestyle" while building camaraderie.

Isuzu Challenge 2003 Fun goes Nationwide

Because of the success of the Isuzu Challenge 2002, Isuzu Philippines Corporation pushed farther by staging Isuzu Challenge 2003 on a more grandiose manner. A nationwide implementation of the program proved true to Isuzu's continued efforts to "Go Farther". Continuing from the format of Isuzu Challenge 2002, provincial legs were staged to select the winners who then competed in the Finals held in November 2003. As Isuzu Challenge 2003 came through, new fuel efficiency records were set as owners and media took up the challenge from Isuzu.



Clean the Slate, Up the Ante

With the phenomenal response from all participants, IPC has decided to split this year's challenge into the E-Drive portion and the Family Fun Activities. Taking the cue from the participant responses and the E-Drive held in Thailand, Isuzu Philippines will stage a more technical E-Drive run on March 27. A route, with a distance of almost 300 km will take the participants from Batangas to a destination up north. Aircon units turned on, vehicles at standard specifications (including tire presure), equal weight add-ons – all these items are scrutinized and checked , leveling the playing field and puts the challenge squarely to Isuzu owners – How far can you go?

In the fuel economy runs staged so far, whether by Isuzu or other bodies, the fuel efficiency of the Isuzu Direct Injection Diesel engine has shone through with winning results. Every year the limits will be pushed further to let the owners unlock the true power of Isuzu – the power to efficiently save and the power to understand that an Isuzu vehicle is truly one of the best investments they could make.So get ready to believe when Isuzu embarks on this year's Isuzu Challenge, and ask – HOW FAR CAN YOU GO?

Nationwide telecast of RP Burlington Youth games

ALL games of the RP-Burlington Youth Team during the 4th Southeast Asian Junior Basketball Championships will be televised nationwide to provide Filipinos a glimpse of their future cage heroes.

Due to the absence of microwave facilities at the Quezon Convention Center in Lucena City, where the tournament will be held April 14-19, however, the games will be shown on a delayed basis.

IBC-13 has given its assurance though that it will be airing the RP Youth games on the same days these were held, either early afternoon or late evening.

The novel project has been given sanction by the Basketball Association of the Philippines, organizer of the five-nation tournament serving as a qualifier for the Asian Basketball Confederation Junior Championships.

Also entered are last year's host and defending champion Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore.

The RP Youth TV coverage will be produced by TEAM Sports, a division of Total Events and Athlete Management Inc., in cooperation with IBC-13/Prime Channel.

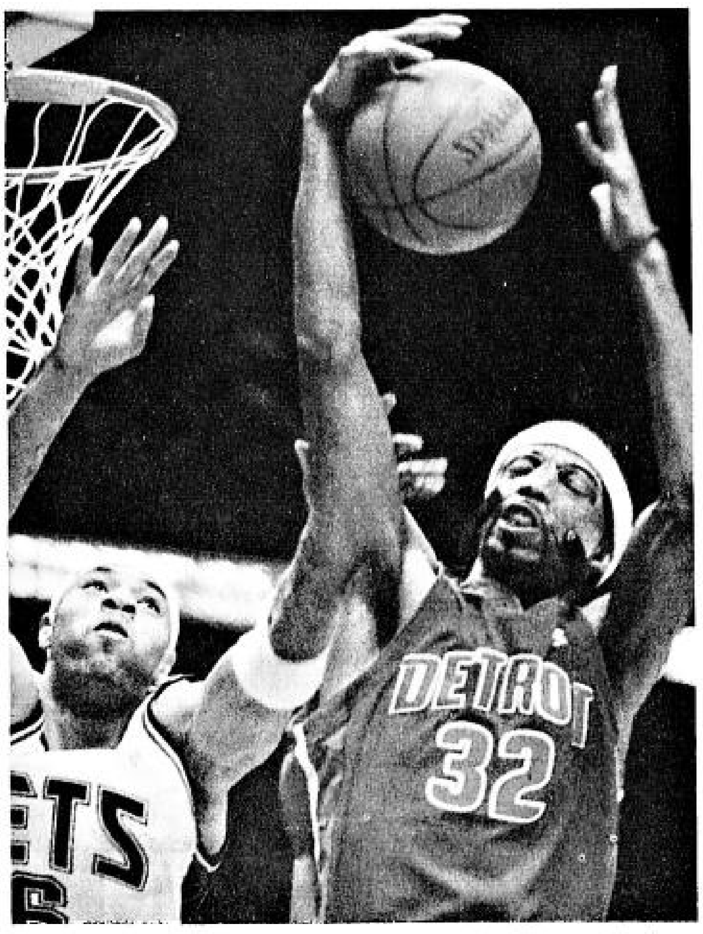
Burlington, official socks of the PBA since 1988 and main backer of the RP Youth Team since 2002, will be the major sponsor.

Youth and sports development has always been part of the corporate mission and vision of Burlington Industries Phils. Inc. Fact is, it continues to assist major local leagues such as the PBL, UAAP, NCAA and the WNCAA.

Other supporters of the Seaba telecast are Accel, Hanford, Hartmann, San Miguel Corp. and RFM.

Negotiations are underway for a slightly delayed broadcast of the final if the Filipinos will contend for the title, according to Teddy S. Pereña of TEAM.

Meanwhile, the RP Youth squad will play a Muntinlupa selection on Sunday.



PISTONS' Richard Hamilton (32) outreaches Nets' Kenyon Martin for a rebound in their NBA game won by the Pistons Thursday. REUTERS

Pistons rip Nets by 18; Sonics win

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey—The Detroit Pistons gave another stifling defensive effort Thursday, following coach Larry Brown's instructions to perfection in an 89-71 victory over the New Jersey Nets.

"There was a period in the second quarter when we defended as well as you could ever defend," Brown said.

Detroit moved two games ahead of New Jersey in the conference standings—an important factor if the teams, all but locked into the Nos. 2 and 3 seeds, meet in the second round of the playoffs.

Chauncey Billups scored 20 points, Rasheed Wallace had 16 and Richard Hamilton 15 for the Pistons, who had held their previous five opponents under 70 points. They almost made it six in succession, but the Nets got a tip-in with 1.1 seconds remaining to surpass 70.

The Pistons held the Nets to 35 percent shooting, forced 17 turnovers and outrebounded the Nets, 47-37. In Memphis, Tennessee, Vladimir Radmanovic and Ray Allen had 19 points each as Seattle beat Memphis.

The SuperSonics led until the fourth quarter, when the Grizzlies staged 14-2 run to take a 78-76 advantage on a dunk by Pau Gasol with 6:10 left. Seattle regained the lead for good at 90-88 with 1:33 left on a jumper by Radmanovic.

The Grizzlies were led by Gasol with 21 points and 15 rebounds.

In San Antonio, Tim Duncan, nursing a sore left knee, had 22 points and 10 rebounds in his first game as a reserve as San Antonio thrashed Minnesota.

Duncan, who missed nine of the Spurs' past 10 games with a left knee injury, had started all 506 games of his NBA career before Thursday. He played 27 minutes, shooting only 6-for-15 from the floor, but making 10 of 15 free throws.

The victory trimmed the Timberwolves' lead in the Midwest Division to 1 1/2 games over the Spurs, who had lost two straight.

Kevin Garnett led Minnesota with 28 points and 12 rebounds, while Sam Cassell scored 21 points.

Complete results: Detroit 89, New Jersey 71; Seattle 97, Memphis 94; San Antonio 106, Minnesota 86. *AP*

Summer swim clinics on

MULTIAWARDED teenage swimmer Em-em Velasco is holding her annual summer swim clinic at the Rizal Sports Club Pool in Pasig City. The clinic started last Wednesday and will continue up to June 6.

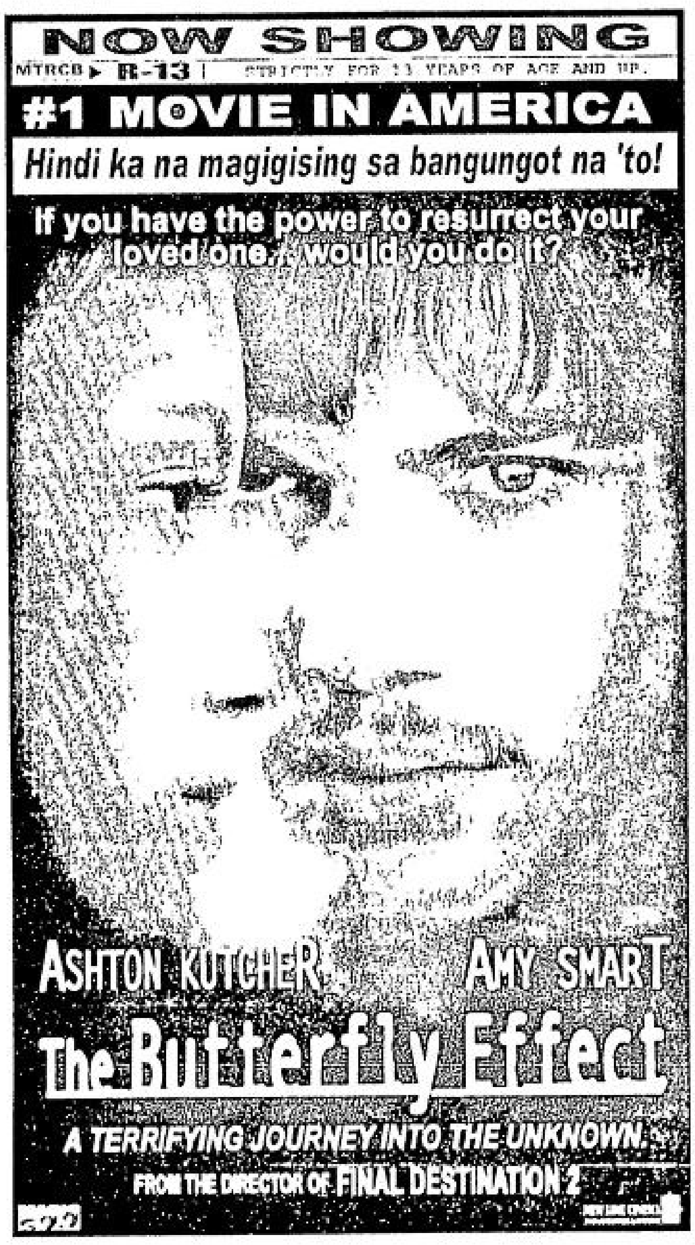
The Australia-trained Velasco uses the latest scientific methods popularized by Australian, American, Japanese and local coaches to start swimmers 3 years and older in the right groove.

Velasco is supported by a team of experienced coaches.

Each of the three levels consists of 12 one-hour sessions.

The first group, which began on March 16, is from the Poveda Learning Center.

For inquiries, call Chery or Brando at 633-0480.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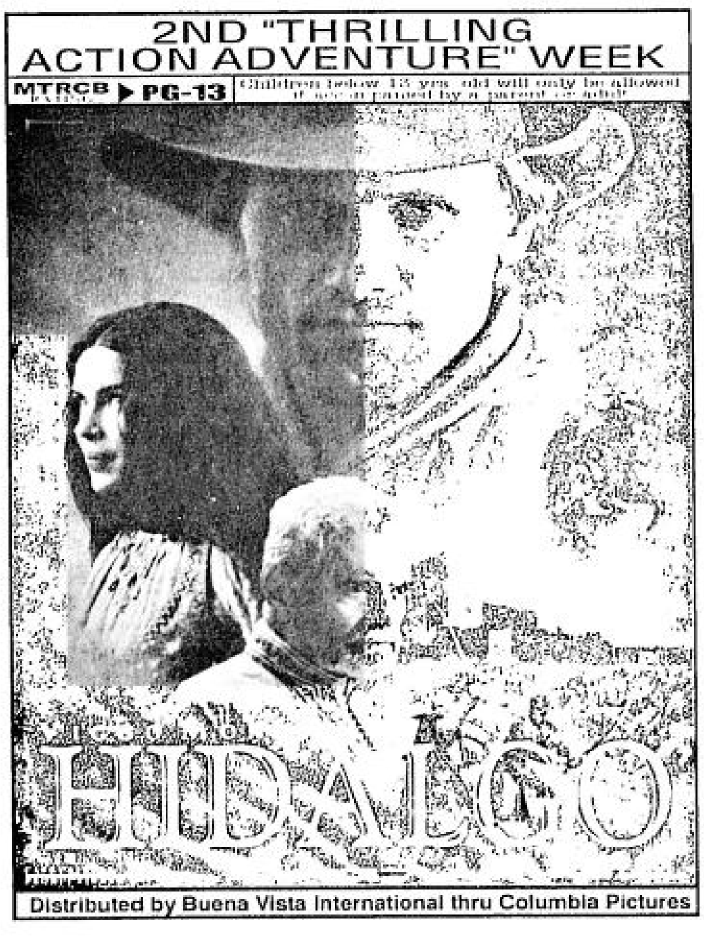
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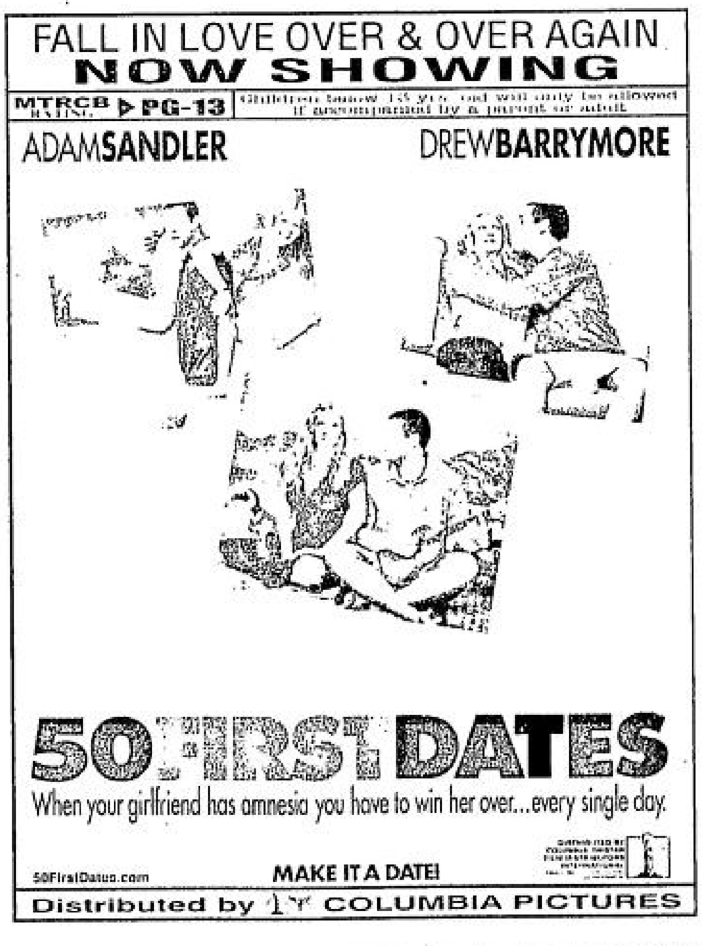
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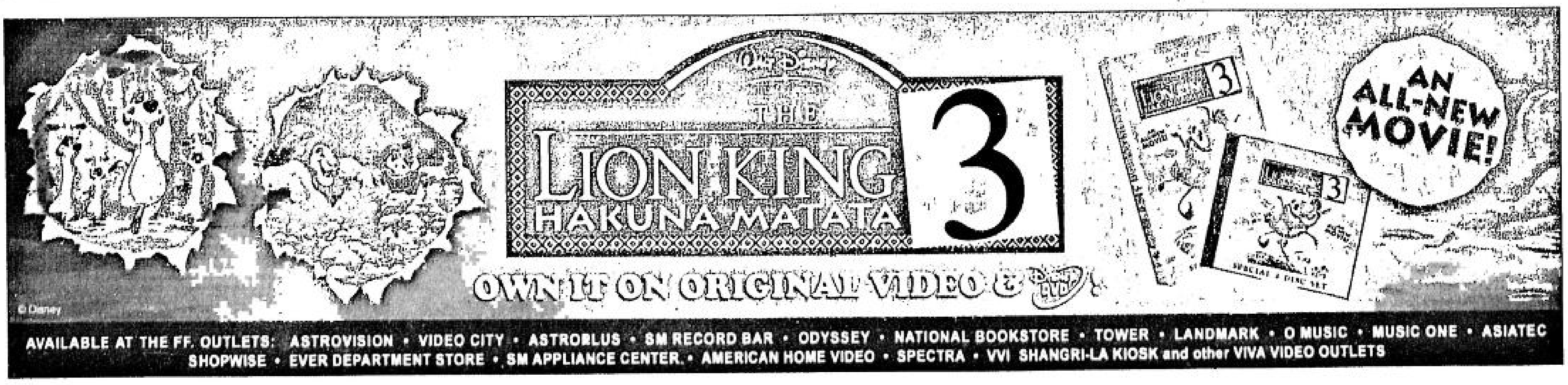
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Center to open Sunday

THE ASUNCION Badminton Center, the country's first for the sport, opens its doors tomorrow at 28 Maclang St., corner P. Guevarra, San Juan, Metro Manila.

The Center aims to turn out badminton champions both for national and international tournaments, according to Nelson Asuncion, head coach of the training team.

World-ranking siblings Kennyvic and Kennie Asuncion are among the 7-member-coach training team. The Center offers summer training programs. For more information, call 725-2568.

National derby tilt

THE NATIONAL Federation of Gamefowl Breeders, with the full backing of Thunderbird Platinum, is giving incentives to early registrants of the Bakbakan National Open 8-Cock Derby.

Eliminations are set in Mindanao (Zamboanga) on April 3, then in the Visayas (Iloilo) on April 4.

Those interested may contact the following: Mindanao—Migba Nitoy Nasser (0917-7008934), ZNGBA Tungkoy Aseniero (0927-4166596), ZGBA-Bobby Fernandez (0920-2567310), NMGBA Emoy Gorgonia (0917-8972816); Visayas—NGBA Mayor Juancho Aguirre (0918-9094540), or at Roligon (8332275/8331638/8529812/0920-3074225).

Slasher new bets

MORE than 40 additional entries from the provinces have signed up for the "Slasher Cup ng Masa 6-Cock Derby" at the Roligon Mega Cockpit on March 24, 26, 29 and 31.

The derby will be hosted by tabloid executive Rey Briones.

Among those entered are Clyde Fernandez, Bong Cayabyab and Mayor Bebot Villar of Pangasinan, Bubot Booc of Pampanga, Bing Paras, Jun Cartina and Councilor Itan Veluz of Cavite, Gov. Tony Kho, Vice Gov. Mario Espinosa and Mayor Bing Abapo of Masbate.

For inquiries, contact 833-2275, 833-1638, 852-9774 and 852-9812 (look for Aubrey, Shirley or Tiling).

April 3 3-cocker

A GUARANTEED prize of P300,000 is up for grabs in a 3-cock derby on April 3 at the new Mandaluyong Coliseum, now under the management of cockpit operators Jonjon Abalos, Kags Paliza and Aba Badiola.

Meanwhile, the regular "Maliitan Lang 2-Cock Ulutan" also sizzles at 8 a.m. today with over 100 entries.

Contact Mandaluyong Coliseum at 532-2650 and 534-4110 for details.

Tiger stalks Bay Hill leaders

ORLANDO, Florida—Tiger Woods began the drive to win his fifth straight Bay Hill Invitational by shooting a 5-under-par 67 on Thursday to stand a stroke off the lead after the first round.

Britain's Darren Clarke, American Chad Campbell and Japan's Shigeki Maruyama all shot 66 for the one-stroke lead over Woods, American tour rookie Zach Johnson, Australian Stuart Appleby and another American, Jerry Kelly.

Australians Aaron Baddeley and Adam Scott shot 4-under-par 68s and were joined in a tie for eighth by Fiji's Vijay Singh along with Americans Brad Faxon, Brian Gay, Scott Verplank, John Daly and Todd Fischer.

Playing in his 26th Bay Hill Invitational, host Arnold Palmer shot a 16-over-par 88.

Woods was pleased with his round of seven birdies and two bogeys. He stayed near the top of the leaderboard all day and made no critical mistakes.

"I just played well," Woods said. "If you were out there, you would see that I really hit some good shots today. I drove it well and controlled my irons going to the greens.

"I hit some really good golf shots today." Clarke has had a difficult time making cuts in full-field tournaments since joining the PGA Tour this year.

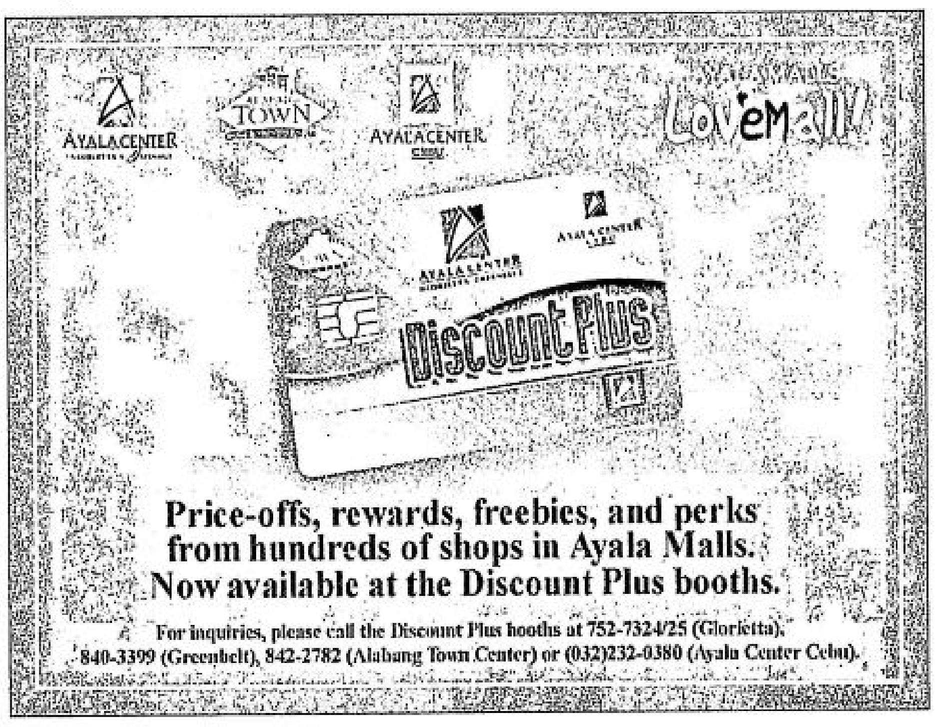
He failed to play on the weekend in three tournaments but finished third in both the restricted-field Mercedes Championships—which had no cut—and the WGC-Match Play Championship.

Clarke ended the day with a bogey-free 66, highlighted by six birdies spread out amongst a bunch of par saves.

Campbell, who made the 2003 Tour Championship his maiden PGA Tour victory, joined Clarke at the top of the leaderboard from the morning tee times.

Similar to the Briton, Campbell has had an up-and-down season so far and matched Clarke with a bogey-free, six-birdie round. *Reuters*

WOODS lines up his putt on the par-4 5th hole during the first round of the Bay Hill Invitational Thursday. He shot a 5-under-par 67 and was one stroke off the joint leaders. AFP



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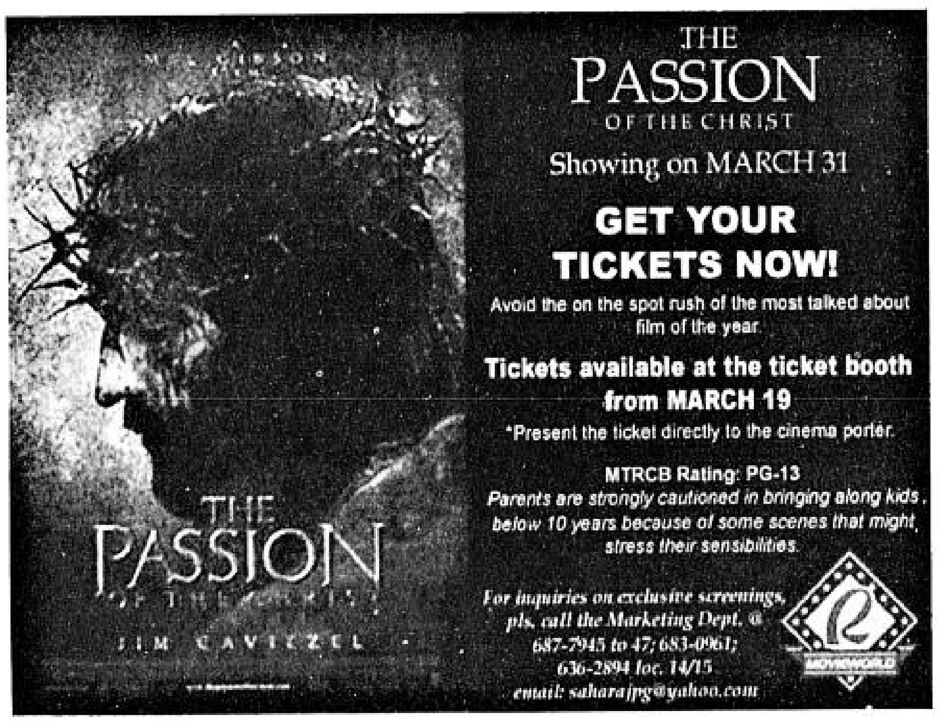
For inquiries, please call the Discount Plus booths at 752-7324/25 (Glorietta), 840-3399 (Greenbelt), 842-2782 (Alabang Town Center) or (032)232-0380 (Ayala Center Cebu).



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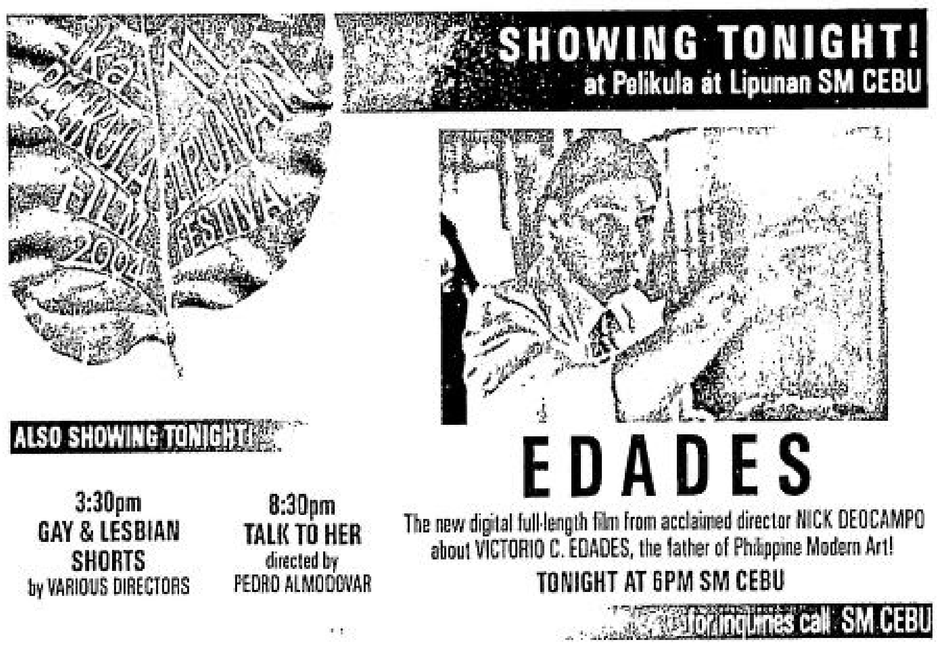

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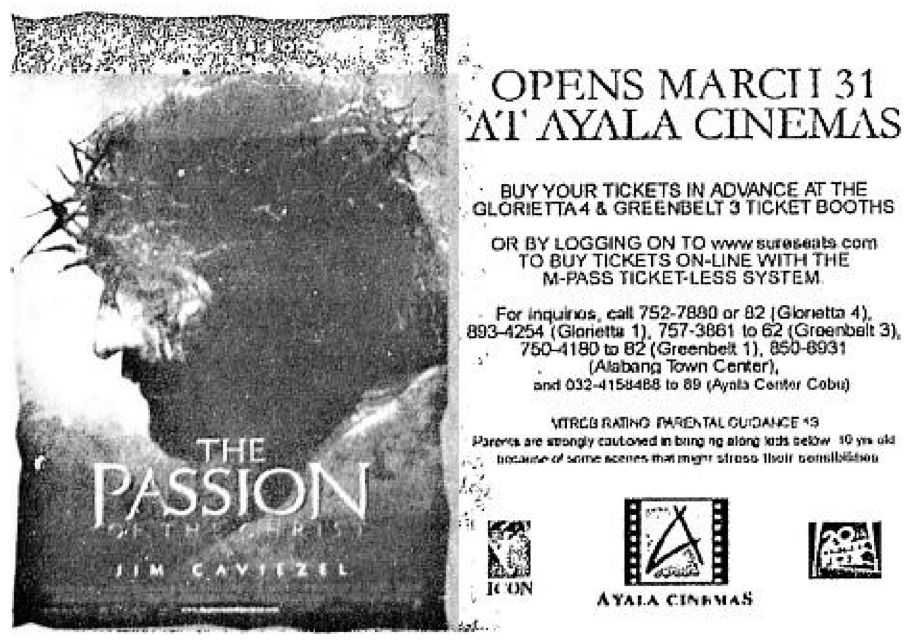

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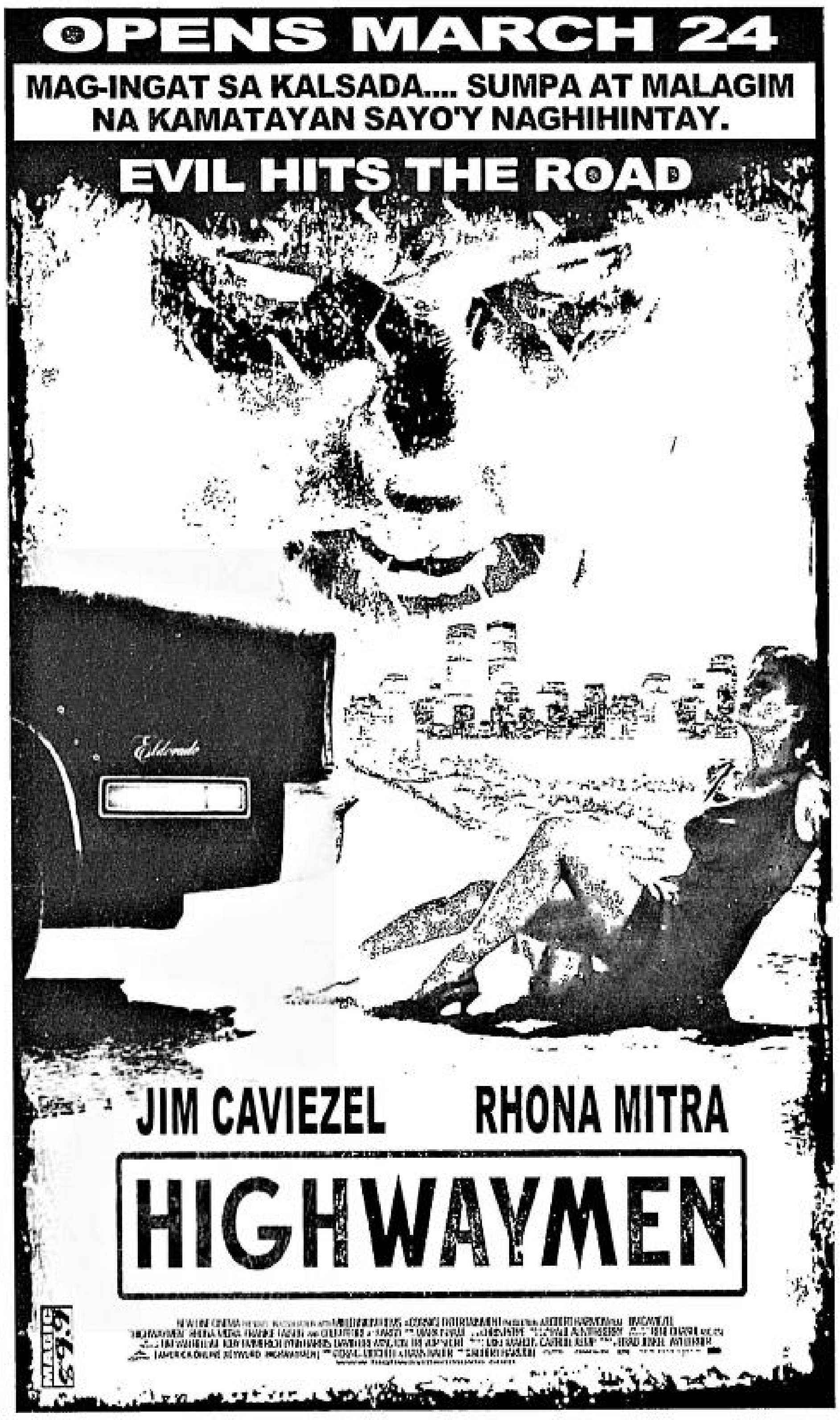
OPENS MARCH 24

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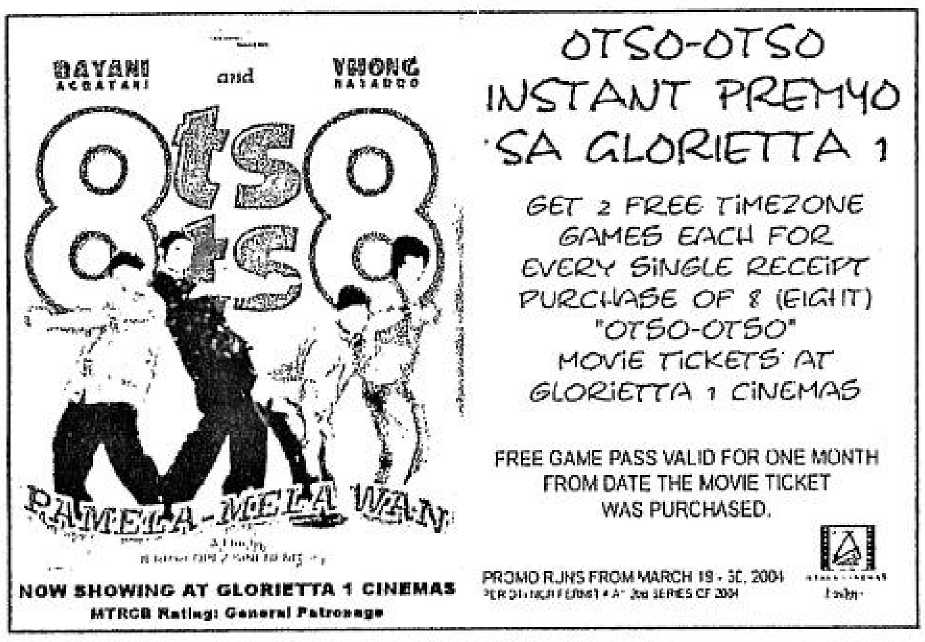

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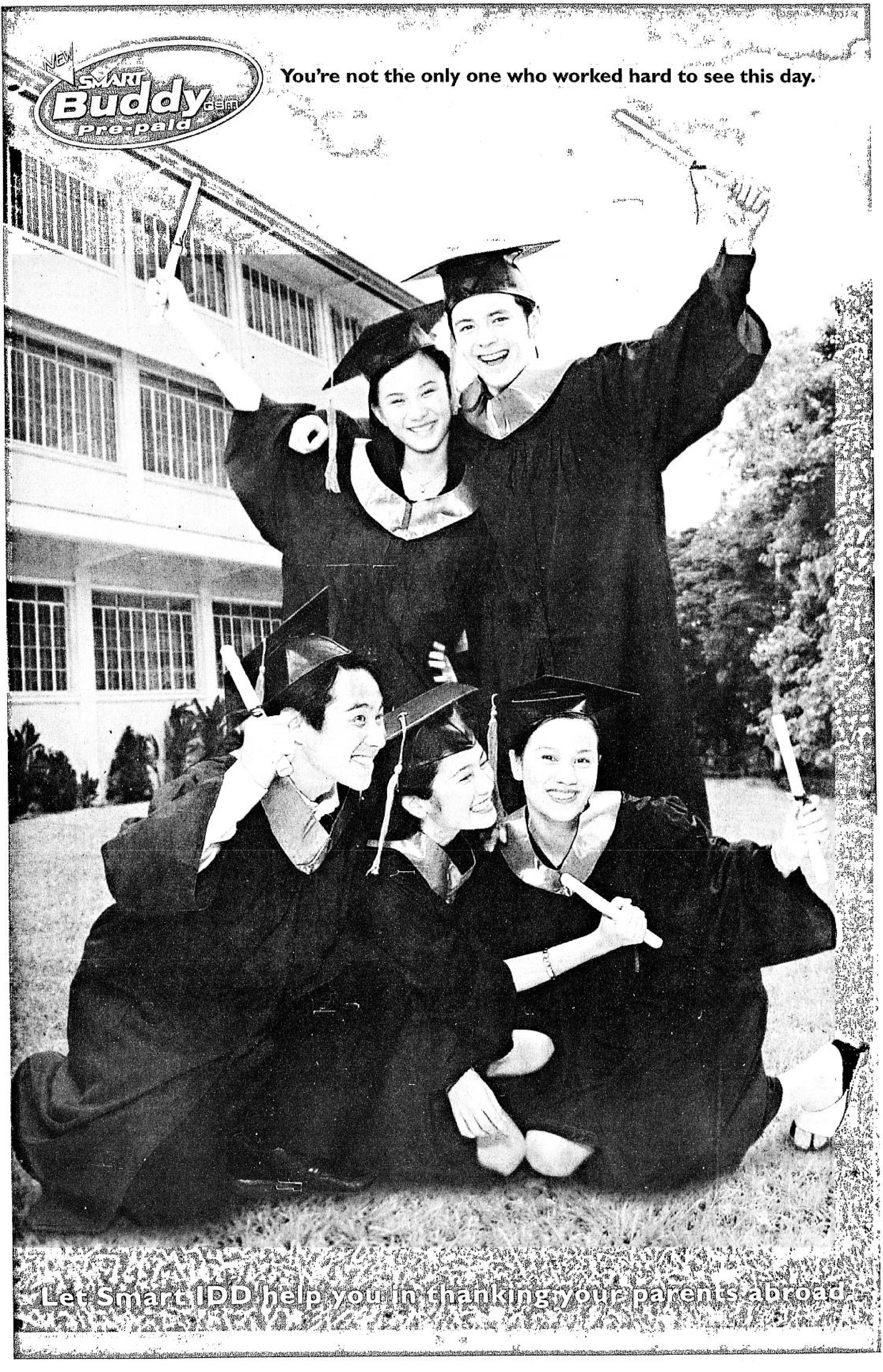
PROMO RUNS FROM MARCH 19 - 30, 2004

More movies on page D2.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BSP chief says debt restructuring possible

By Doris C. Dumlao

BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said there was room for the next administration to stretch out the country's debt maturities to improve its debt profile.

Buenaventura said the country's consolidated public sector debt had an average maturity of 19 years but it might be possible to term out some of these liabilities.

"The more we can stretch out, the better," Buenaventura said.

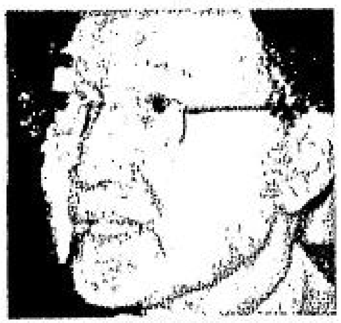
As long as the restructuring was market-based, such as the recent debt swap undertaken by the government, it would be good for the fiscal managers.

"The idea is to stretch out as much as we can," he said.

Presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. earlier called for a debt restructuring, which would not be a unilateral act on the part of the government but instead be done with the full consent and cooperation of the creditors.

His comments spooked the financial markets on the eve of a sovereign global bond offering but the succeeding clarification allayed fears that the restructuring proposal would be tantamount to a debt moratorium.

FPJ's team clarified that the proposal meant stretching the amortization period of the country's debt, so that payments to be deferred could be channeled to projects needed to spur economic growth that, in turn, would improve our capacity to pay debts.


BUENAVENTURA

The Philippines' total foreign debt stock is projected to rise to $59.4 billion by year's end from $56.7 billion as of end-2003 on additional public sector borrowings.

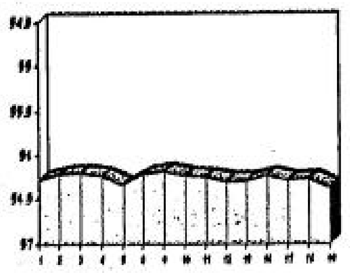
Based on official government documents, the estimated debt level this year would account for 64.1 percent of the country's gross domestic product, or the total amount of goods and services produced by economy for a given period. However, this projected ratio is an improvement from the 67.1 percent for 2003 and 72.7 percent in 2002.

Buenaventura said he also believed the country's next president must address bottlenecks in the power sector and the government's fragile budget position as top priorities during the first 100 days in office.

The BSP chief said the next administration must speed up the privatization of state-owned power utilities so that the proceeds could be used to address the sector's huge debt.

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES


MARCH

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P56.38 = $1
As of 5 p.m., March 19, 2004

¥106.81 = $1
As of 5 p.m., March 19, 2004

GOLD: $399.60-400.10
per ounce Hong Kong, March 18, 2004

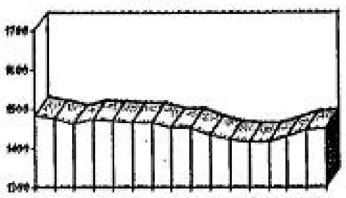
STOCK MARKET

Stocks sustain rise, Benpres soars

STOCKS ended higher yesterday for a third day running as players pounced on blue chips such as power distributor Meralco and conglomerate Benpres after the market's recent decline.

Analysts said investors welcomed news that Benpres had bailed out from its water distributing unit, Maynilad, as part of a compromise with the government over unpaid concession fees.

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX
MARCH



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Benpres—whose units include the country's largest media outfit, ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp., and dominant power retailer Manila Electric Co. (Meralco)—finished 9.8 percent higher at 56 centavos.

"B" shares of Meralco, those open to foreigners, finished 3.39 percent or P1 higher at P30.50. Meralco "A" shares, which are restricted to Filipinos, rose 1.32 percent or 25 centavos to P19.25. The company will announce its results on March 24.

"The market gains may extend further for a few more days but the lack of fresh positive developments in the coming week will keep it in consolidation," said RCBC Securities research head Chelsea Dipasupil.

The main index finished 2.77 points or 0.19 percent higher at 1,450.83 points. The market is up 0.59 percent so far this year.

Turnover dipped to P617.2 million from Thursday's P619.2 million. Gainers beat losers 26 to 18 and there were 39 stocks unchanged.

Pilipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel), the country's third-largest phone firm, rose 4.76 percent or eight centavos to P1.76, after parent firm PLDT said it was looking for options to improve its debt condition.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) said on Monday it was considering using debt issued by Smart Communications Inc. to restructure $403 million of international borrowings by Piltel. PLDT was unchanged at P930.

STOCKS/ B2

RP seeks US funding for ecozones

By Michelle V. Remo

THE PHILIPPINES is seeking financial assistance from the US government to help fulfill the goals of the newly approved Regional Economic Zone Authority (Reza), the creation of which is aimed at uplifting the economy of the Muslim region in the South.

Philippine Economic Zone Authority Director General Lilia de Lima, in a videoconference with US Department of State official Shaun Donnelly, urged the US government to allocate part of its financial assistance program for third-world countries for projects that would help develop the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao into an economic enclave.

Reza is tasked to create economic zones in the ARMM, whose economy has lagged behind other areas in the country due to armed conflict. The creation of Reza is seen as part of efforts to boost business in the South, whose

RP SEEKS/ B3

Imports up 9% in January; trade gap widens to $336M

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S imports for January this year rose by 9 percent, indicating a possible expansion in exports in the coming months, the National Statistics Office reported yesterday.

The NSO said imports in January increased to $3.18 billion from $2.92 billion during the same period last year.

An increase in imports indicates a rise in manufacturing activity and in exports because the country buys from abroad the bulk of the raw materials for its major exports like electronics.

But while a rise in imports could be taken positively, it likewise affects the country's balance of trade. The increase in January imports resulted in a wider trade gap for the Philippines. The trade deficit for January ballooned by 81.62 percent to $336 million from $185 million recorded a year ago.

A trade deficit or surplus is the difference between imports and exports. The NSO earlier reported that Philippine exports for January grew by 4.1 percent to $2.84 billion from $2.73 billion during the same month last year.

On a month-on-month basis, the $3.18-billion expenditure for imports during the month was 3.5 percent higher than the $3.07 billion in December.

Electronics remained the country's top import product, accounting for 44.5 percent of the total import bill. The country's electronics imports are usually raw materials for finished products for exports.

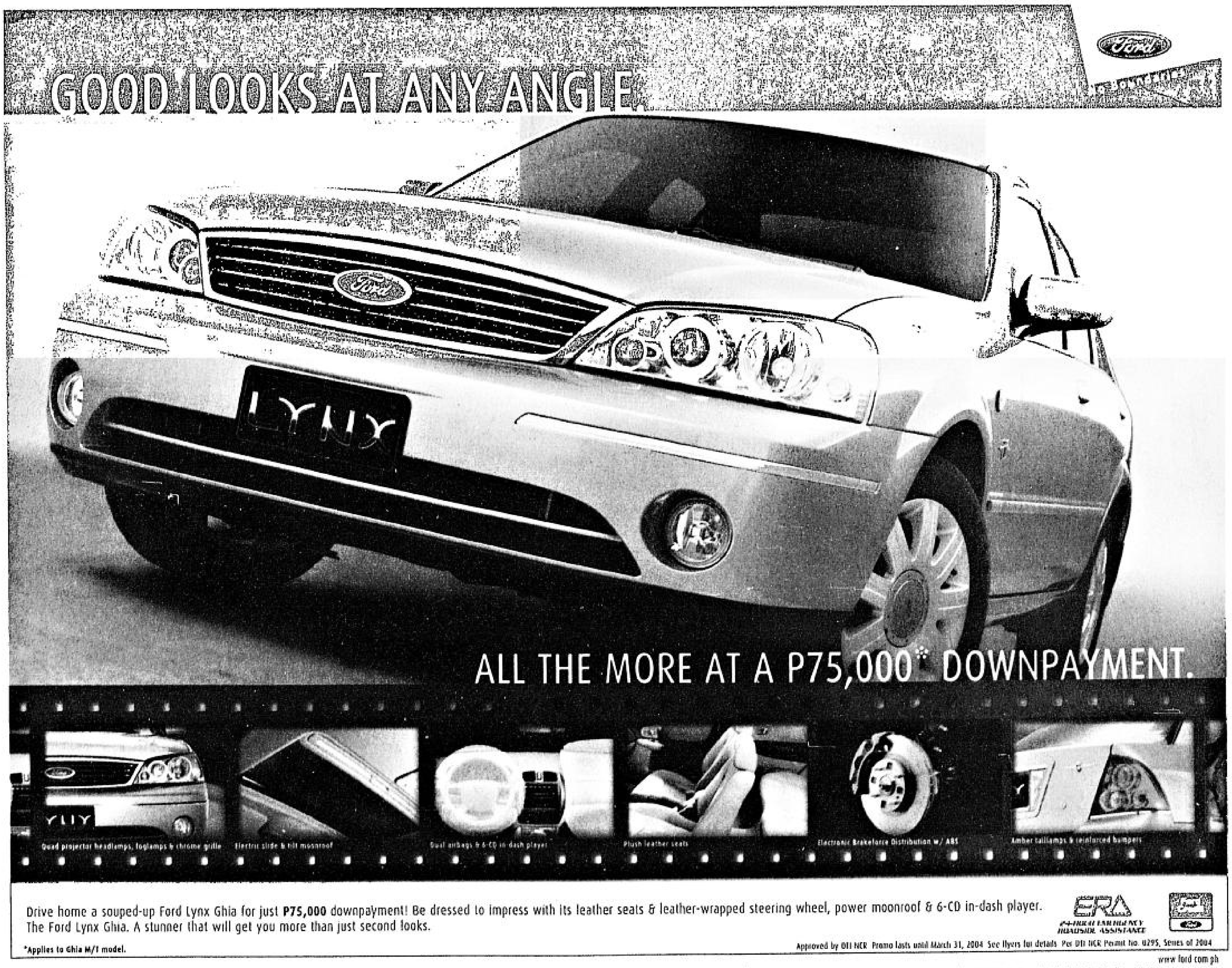
Payments for electronics reached $1.42 billion, or 11.9 percent higher than last year's $1.27 billion.

Imports of mineral fuels, lubricants and related products was the country's second top imports, accounting for 11.8 percent of the month's import bill. Expenditures for this category stood at $375.99 million, or 14.2 percent higher than last year's $329.22 million.

Expenditure for industrial machinery and equipment stood at $145.36 million, accounting for 25.5 percent of the total import bill for the month.

The country's imports also included iron and steel products ($111.36 million), trans-

IMPORTS / B2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BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

WITH the unsettling things happening in our country, such as the exclusion of Eddie Gil from the race for the presidency, it is about time we look at the good things around us.

This cute administration of Gloriaetta, for one, in what could be its biggest contribution to the presidency as an institution, is creating another level of bureaucracy.

In the lingo of this cute administration, such a level is known by its daunting technical designation as "task force."

We have task forces to oversee the government's all sorts of bodies, which do what the task forces are doing. Now we need more task forces to oversee all those task forces. Hay naku!

* * *

THIS time, from what I heard, the Palace is creating a new task force to fight another money-making crime, the one called "smuggling."

We also have all sorts of task forces to fight jueteng, for instance. But even with Bong this and Bong that, well, jueteng still operates with impunity in lahar country.

By the way, it is the same Bong this or Bong that who is said to be financing the political campaign of somebody high up there in Malacañang.

Anyway, the new task force is going to be known as the National Anti-Smuggling Task Force, or Nastaf, which to me sounds as menacing as the voice of Jose Pidal.

* * *

WORD is out, anyway, that the Palace-chosen head of Nastaf is the same guy who heads the so-called NAKTF, or the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force.

He is none other than Secretary (without portfolio) Angelo "Angie" Reyes, a retired general who is a Cabinet member in charge of what only they in the Palace know.

Angie was the defense secretary, until he had to be sacrificed before the altar of politics to appease the mob after the Oakwood excursion of junior military officers.

It seems the Nastaf, as a super body of sorts, will have to duplicate the functions of the Bureau of Customs. This, or it is just another body on top of the bureau. Swell!

* * *

SAID to be pushing for the creation of the smuggling task force is none other than Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo.

Romulo also used to be the finance secretary, until one day Gloriaetta realized that Romulo was bluffing his way to solving the government's humongous money problem.

And so Romulo went to work at Malacañang, where he and two other Cabinet members at one time did not—NEVER—mess up a mass transit project.

Still, word goes around that Romulo already talked to the personalities who figure in this new task force. For one, the task force is bound to create a turf war.

* * *

HIGH on the list of those personalities, of course, should be Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo, whose agency is in charge of fighting smuggling.

During the Marcos dictatorship, a similar anti-smuggling body, known by another best-forgotten technical designation, was created under the finance ministry.

It was then headed by Jose Almonte, another retired general who became the national security adviser of Kuya Eddie.

The body continued to exist under the Cory administration. It never stopped smuggling of course, because, if anything, smuggling became even worse.

* * *

NOBODY knows how the hardworking Bernardo will take the creation of the new task force, which for all intents and purposes is another body on top of customs.

Will he or will he not take it as an insult, if not to his person, at least to his leadership and management style. All right—his performance.

Customs, under Bernardo, happens to have posted the best revenue collection record among the government revenue agencies. It exceeded its target by P3 billion.

In other words, Customs was the only agency that earned more money for the government than what was expected of it. The others simply spent a lot of money.

* * *

AND look how they really spent! The budget deficit of this cute administration stands at P200 billion this year alone. And that is not the whole picture.

Thanks to the bright idea of this cute administration to subsidize electricity rates by cutting the so-called PPA, the overall public sector deficit is going to hit P350 billion.

That includes the hidden "deficit" in Napocor, which stands to lose something like P140 billion this year, because of the power rate cut ordered by the Palace.

So there—Gloriaetta "solved," so to speak, the PPA problem by creating a much bigger problem in government finances. Is the Nastaf going to be any different?

* * *

BUT Bernardo is not your regular belligerent public official. If I know the guy, he is not going to make a big thing out of the issue. He will just resign without fanfare.

Still, from what I heard, to massage Bernardo's ego, whoever thought of creating the Nastaf is laying a compromise on the table.

To prevent a turf war, Customs will be THE anti-smuggling agency but only inside the ports.

Outside the ports, the Nastaf is king, which is anywhere from here to the warehouses outside the private pier of a certain MT in Batangas.

* * *

ALL RIGHT, agreed, the smuggling syndicates are punishing a lot of local businesses. But smuggling is not their only problem.

Another one is the lack of confidence, for which we must thank the Supreme Court, which single-handedly drove away foreign investors with its unique style of meddling.

Being hard up and all, businessmen are saying that if you can pay the salaries of your workers on time, you are already successful.

One other big problem is the government. It is the biggest buyer of them all, accounting for about 30 to 40 percent of the economy. It is not wise to sell to the government today.

* * *

FOR to make itself look good, this cute administration is trying to window dress its finances by postponing cash payments. Who are they fooling?

Those who do business with the government know the real score. They cannot collect. And so in this country, even the government is not a good credit risk.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the economic management style of Gloriaetta, who warns us against "kitchenomics."

And so we have a problem like the PPA. Why, let's subsidize the rates! Anyway, we will only create a bigger problem.

You say we have to stop smuggling? Easy. Let's put another body on top of Customs. It also makes for good publicity! There, the problem is solved.

Imports . . .

From page B1

port equipment (P103.38 million), fabrics and related products ($69.69 million), telecommunication equipment and electrical machinery ($68.6 million), plastics ($65.55 million), cereals and cereal preparation ($59.05 million) and organic and inorganic chemicals ($53.21 million).

Japan was the country's biggest source of imports, accounting for 18.1 percent of the total import bill. Expenditures for Japan imports stood at $576.04 million, or 12.3 percent higher than the $512.98 million recorded during the same month last year.

Stocks . . .

From page B1

First Grade Holdings managing director Astro del Castillo said the market would probably move within the 1,440 to 1,480 range in the next session.

He said investors were waiting for results from blue chips such as Meralco, oil refiner Petron, mall developer SM Prime Holdings Inc. and conglomerate JG Summit Holdings. *Reuters*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 19, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	20,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17.75	18	17.75	18	75,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	45	45	45	45	312,000
China Banking Corp.	670	670	670	670	30
Citystate Savings Bank	16.25	16.25	16.25	16.25	2,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	39	39	38.5	39	28,000
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.57	0.58	0.57	0.57	290,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	24.5	24.5	24.25	24.5	85,000
Prudential Bank	400	400	400	400	2,000
Philippine National Bank	23.5	23.5	23.25	23.25	27,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	25.5	26	25.5	26	62,900
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	50,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	180	180	180	180	10
Manulife Financial Corp.	1955	1955	1955	1955	500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1455	1455	1455	1455	300
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	23	23.25	23	23	39,300
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.68	0.68	0.67	0.67	520,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	855	855	850	850	22,750
ISM Communications Corp.	0.037	0.038	0.036	0.037	2,500,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	23,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.72	1.76	1.7	1.76	21,676,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	945	945	930	930	161,670
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.013	0.011	0.013	420,300,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	18.75	19.25	18.75	19.25	119,400
Manila Electric Co. B	29.5	30.5	29.5	30.5	822,200
Petron Corp.	2.95	3.05	2.95	3	3,011,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	200,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.24	1.24	100,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3	3	3	3	35,000
Negros Navigation Co. Inc.	0.36	0.4	0.36	0.4	650,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	600,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.52	1.52	1.48	1.52	385,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3	3	3	3	1,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	5,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5	12,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	17.25	17.25	17	17	1,437,400
San Miguel Corp. A	57	57	56.5	57	128,900
San Miguel Corp. B	70	71	70	71	428,700
Universal Robina Corp.	6.5	6.6	6.5	6.5	98,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	200,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	260,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	30,000
Ayala Corp.	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	23,182,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.021	0.022	0.02	0.022	2,900,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1	1	1	1	110,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005	7,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	20,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.55	0.57	0.54	0.56	26,270,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp	21.25	22	21.25	22	248,800
Ionics Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	248,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	500,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	500,000
Medco Holdings	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	60,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.02	1.02	1	1	179,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.27	5,820,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.86	0.86	0.85	0.86	130,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	14	14	14	14	900
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Cen Azucar de Tarlac	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	10,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	40,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	50,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.49	0.5	530,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	320,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	23.25	23.5	23.25	23.5	255,400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	1,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	200
Philweb Corp. - Warrants	0.0002	0.0002	0.0002	0.0002	50,000,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.5	5.5	5.4	5.5	11,933,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	10,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	350,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1	1	1	1	11,120,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.17	0.17	0.165	0.165	6,750,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	189,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.7	5,236,000
MINING					
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	5,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.25	0.25	0.24	0.24	610,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	4,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.0026	0.0026	0.0026	0.0026	7,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	500,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	10,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	9,000,000
Pacifica	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	6,000,000

DISCLOSURES

SUN Life Financial Inc. will hold its annual stockholders meeting on May 19. Record date is on April 2.

* * *

FIL-ESTATE Land Inc. (LND) disclosed that Ruben R. Payumo, the new independent director of the corporation, has accepted his nomination as a member of LND's committes on audit, nomination and executive compensation. He assumes the position vacated by Rafael E. Evangelista.

* * *

LMG Chemicals Corp. conducted last March 11 an auction sale with Henry Butcher International Phils. Inc., as auctioneer, in San Pascual, Batangas for the auction of the company's Alkylation Plant. The gross proceeds of the auction sale amounted to P6.4 million.

* * *

MANILA Jockey Club Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 26 at 9 a.m. at the Sampaguita Hall of the Manila Hotel, Manila. Record date is on March 15.

* * *

METRO Pacific Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 30 at 10 a.m. at the New World Renaissance Hotel in Makati City. Record date is on March 31.

* * *

BENPRES Holdings Corp. confirmed that Maynilad Water Services Inc. and MWSS have agreed on a compromise plan that includes the quasi-reorganization of Maynilad and debt restructuring.

* * *

MANILA Electric Co. will announce its 2003 Full Year Report on March 24. An investors' briefing will also be conducted on the same date at 2:30 p.m. at the Meralco Center in Pasig City.

* * *

JG Summit Holdings Inc. disclosed that its shareholders approved the reclassification of a portion of the company's common shares into preferred shares. After the reclassification, the company's capital stock of 14.85 billion will be 12.85 billion common shares with a par value of P1 per share and 2 billion preferred shares with a par value of P1 per share.

* * *

BOGO-MEDELLIN Milling Co. Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 28 at 10 a.m. at Barangay Luy-a, Madellin, Cebu. Record date is on April 5.

* * *

UNION Bank of the Philippines obtained the approval for the cash dividend declaration of P0.75 per share. Record date is on April 2 and the payment date was set on May 3. However, the payment date is not in accordance with the disclosure rules. The trading participants and the investing public will be informed of further developments on the matter. ***Compiled by Ray Leyesa, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

March 19, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.806777	1.000000	56.2580
Japan	Yen	0.007560	0.009371	0.5272
United Kingdom	Pound	1.480274	1.834800	103.2222
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.103534	0.128330	7.2196
Switzerland	Franc	0.642031	0.795798	44.7700
Canada	Dollar	0.607284	0.752729	42.3470
Singapore	Dollar	0.477835	0.592277	33.3203
Australia	Dollar	0.604418	0.749176	42.1471
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.140048	2.652590	149.2294
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.215146	0.266674	15.0025
Brunei	Dollar	0.476424	0.590528	33.2219
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000094	0.000117	0.0066
Thailand	Baht	0.020503	0.025413	1.4297
UAE	Dirham	0.219656	0.272264	15.3170
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.239500	69.7318
Argentina	Peso	0.279888	0.346921	19.5171
Brazil	Real	0.276482	0.342700	19.2796
Denmark	Kroner	0.134264	0.166420	9.3625
India	Rupee	0.017845	0.022119	1.2444
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.212338	0.263193	14.8067
Mexico	New Peso	0.073560	0.091178	5.1295
New Zealand	Dollar	0.529902	0.656814	36.9510
Norway	Kroner	0.117466	0.145599	8.1911
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014056	0.017422	0.9801
South Africa	Rand	0.121548	0.150659	8.4758
Korea	Won	0.000697	0.000864	0.0486
Sweden	Kroner	0.108123	0.134018	7.5396
Syria	Pound	0.015635	0.019380	1.0903
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024426	0.030276	1.7033
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000421	0.000522	0.0294

AN IMPORTANT ADVISORY FROM THE AMERICAN EYE CENTER

In a recent circular, PhilHealth revoked its coverage of LASIK surgery for the correction of errors of refraction. In compliance with this directive, American Eye Center has no recourse but to suspend the said privilege. Patients who wish to avail of this benefit can only do so until March 25, 2004.

Rest assured that PhilHealth and American Eye Center will exhaust all means to restore this much needed PhilHealth benefit to the Filipino community.

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RP seeks US funding for ecozones

From page B1

lackluster economy is often blamed on the government's perceived lack of attention to Mindanao.

"We hope the US government may consider granting assistance for the economic development of the area, considering that your country considers the Philippines as one of your major allies in your fight against terrorism," De Lima told Donnelly during the conference.

The request for financial assistance followed the US government's announcement that it has recently established Millennium Challenge Corp. (MCC), which will be tasked to provide financial assistance to qualified countries.

With the launching of MCC, for which the US government will allot $5 billion next year, the Department of State has encouraged poor countries to avail themselves of the financial assistance available for them.

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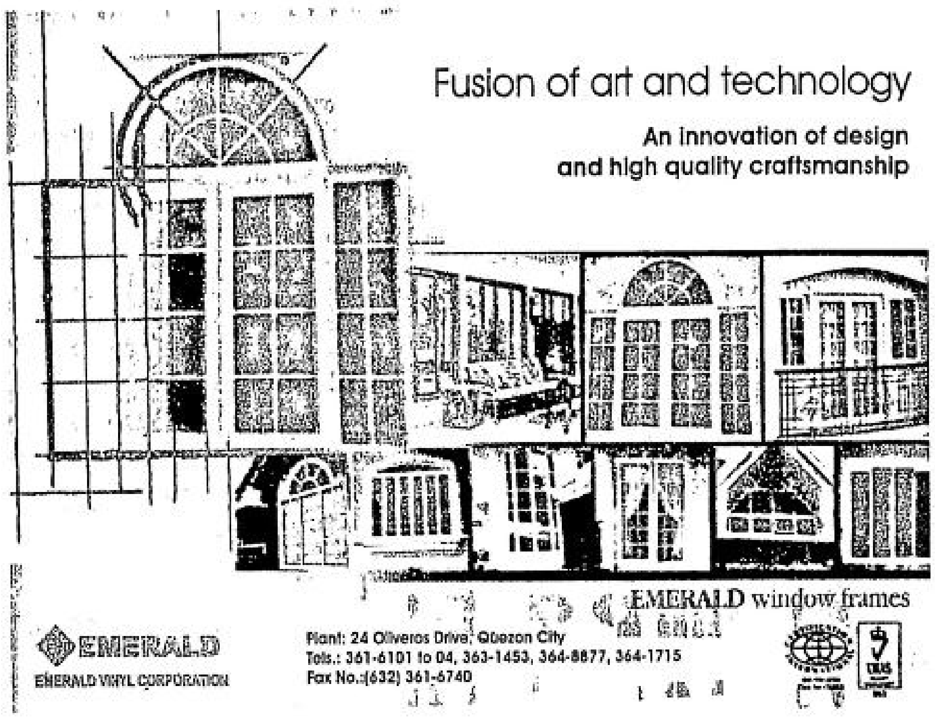
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A unique process in achieving 24-hour BP control

High blood pressure is a common malady. Even if you do not have it, chances are you know someone who does. Yet as common as it is, treating high blood pressure remains to be one of medicine's toughest challenges. It is estimated that less than a quarter of people with high blood pressure actually have it under optimal control.

Dr. Thomas Pickering, director of Cardiovascular Institute and Center for Cardiovascular Health at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, said that when a person with hypertension takes a medicine which is not long-acting, there will be a period in which he is relatively unprotected against blood pressure (BP) surges. The only way to be protected from BP surges is to have an effective medicine which would provide 24-hour protection.

L.R. Imperial, a division of United Laboratories, will soon launch a new brand of antihypertensive with the mentioned ideal profile. The drug, which has felodipine as its active ingredient, is manufactured to provide sustained control of BP for 24 hours. Felodipine, a calcium channel blocker, is one of the most prescribed antihypertensive drugs in the world.

Dr. Eileen Changchien, a pharmacokinetic expert, explained the uniqueness and advantages of the upcoming brand of 5mg felodipine. According to Dr. Changchien, there are several ways of manufacturing felodipine, and this upcoming brand is prepared through the one-step process (dry method) in which the active ingredient (felodipine) is evenly distributed throughout the tablet resulting in sustained drug concentration in the blood over a 24-hour period. This unique process has been issued a US patent.

The drug's formulation includes HPMC (hydroxypropyl methyl cellulose), which provides consistent release of felodipine in the blood, making it effective throughout the 24-hour period. Because of this, the patient is guaranteed of sustained BP control with once daily dosing.

An added advantage of the new brand of felodipine is its price. In line with the pharmacoeconomic's advocacy of United Laboratories, LRI will market the drug at half the price of the originator brand. Patients will not just be ensured of blood pressure control 24 hours a day, but they are also ensured that they can sustain their treatment for a long period of time. It is a known fact that hypertension is a chronic disease that requires life-long treatment.

With the introduction of a pharmacoeconomic antihypertensive, LRI affirms their commitment by providing Filipinos *treatment sustainability within reach*. This is in line with the company's Pharmacoeconomic tagline "Gamot na umuubra sa presyong hindi sobra".

Felodipine and other anti-hypertensive drugs are classified by BFAD as prescription drugs and should only be taken upon the advice of a doctor.

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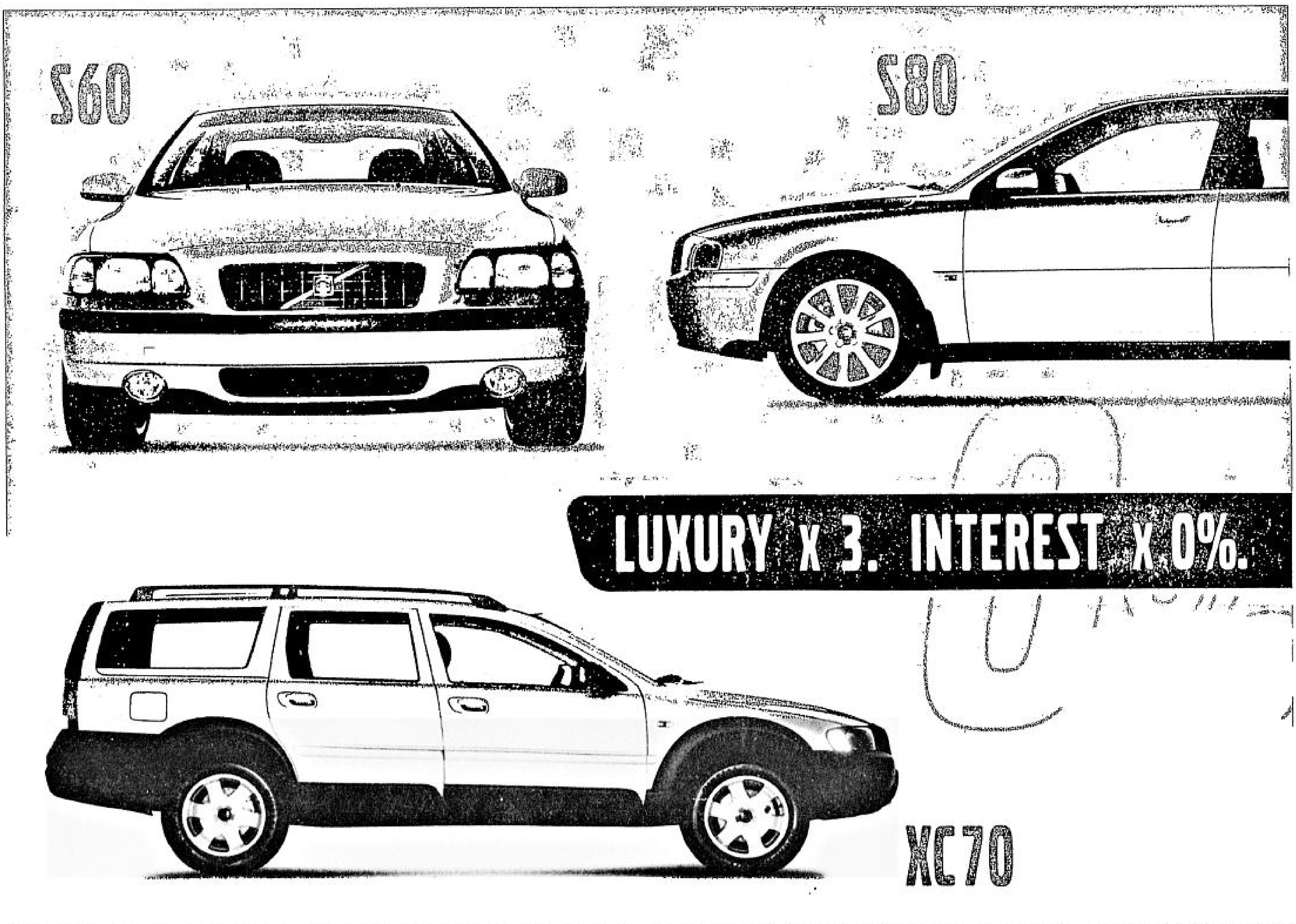

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Per DTI-NCR Permit no 0354 Series of 2004

WESM prepares for mid-2005 opening, sees ₱100B in sales

By Abigail L. Ho

THE WHOLESALE electricity spot market (WESM) is seen handling P80 billion to P100 billion worth of transactions yearly. WESM is scheduled to start full commercial operation in the middle of next year.

Lasse Holopainen, president of WESM system operator Philippine Electricity Market. Corp. (PEMC), said partnerships with local banks would be put in place within the year to handle payments for electricity bought in the spot market.

He said bidding for the contract to handle the electricity bourse's payment transactions would likely take place in June.

National Transmission Corp. (Transco) vice president for market operations Rizalino Santos said the contract could go to a single bank or a consortium of banks.

Although bidding terms of reference have yet to be released to prospective bidders, he said three local financial institutions had already expressed interest in serving as WESM's clearinghouse for payments.

These include Ayala-owned Bank of the Philippine Islands, Citibank and Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., he revealed.

One aspect of the WESM's market management system (MMS) is the electronic fund transfer function, which will allow market participants to make payments online.

All WESM transactions will be done via the Internet using a system infrastructure set up by Asea Brown Boveri Inc. (ABB), which recently bagged the WESM's $8.47-million MMS contract.

The electricity bourse's vital functions include electricity trading operations, administration, metering, settlements and accounting.

The system would be designed to handle initially 600 participants, Santos said.

In a related development, Holopainen said the PEMC would be drafting guidelines that would govern how market participants should act within the spot market.

These guidelines would deal with electricity oversupply or undersupply, with the objective of ensuring that market rules are strictly observed.

"The guidelines will ensure that they (market participants) behave according to their bids. If they act in collusion with each other and suddenly change their prices, we'll base (sanctions) on the (Electric Power Industry Reform Act)," he said

PLDT to issue 1M shares for SIP

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission has cleared the way for Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) to issue and sell P10 million worth of shares under a subscriber investment plan as the corporate watchdog exempted the securities from registration requirements.

The subscriber investment plan was put up in 1974 to implement Presidential Decree No. 217, which mandates subscribers to fund part of the capital investment in installing telephone lines by investing in a phone company.

To implement this plan, PLDT creates a new series of 10 percent cumulative convertible preferred stock every year for issuance at P10 per share to subscribers.

The one million shares to be issued at P10 per share are designated as 10 percent cumulative convertible preferred stock series EE.

Under the plan, PLDT has issued 390 million A to AA series of convertible preferred stocks, 30 million of BB and 10 million of the first tranche of CC shares, another 10 million as the second tranche of CC shares and 10 million DD shares.

As of December 2003, PLDT has 234 million in authorized capital stock and 169 million in total issued and outstanding shares.

Gov't wooing 5 freight carriers to locate in RP

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE MACAPAGAL administration is eyeing the entry of five more major foreign freight carriers to make the Philippines, particularly the Clark and Subic airports their regional hub.

Nippon Cargo Airlines, Royal Dutch Airlines, Global Express, Logistics and Mail, and Cargolux are some of the companies that the government intends to lure into locating in Clark and Subic following the issuance of Executive Order 253, which provides for an open-skies policy for cargo.

Freight carriers Federal Express already operates in Subic while United Parcel Service operates in Clark.

The EO signed in December gave foreign cargo carriers unrestricted access to Clark Special Economic Zone (Diosdado Macapagal International Airport) and Subic Bay Freeport Zone (Subic Bay International Airports).

Groups favoring the adoption of open skies policy said the open-skies policy would attract more foreign freight carriers to do business in the country.

The government said it spent almost P1 billion to improve the airport facilities in the two economic zones so the Clark and Subic airports could accommodate more international flights.

Clark International Airport Corp. president Adelberto Yap earlier said that a week after the EO was signed, his office received proposals from a US cargo firm to create a hub in the said airport.

"Gulf Air and Qatar as well as Nippon Cargo have also expressed interest to operate in Clark," Yap had said. Yap said the declaration of "open skies" in Clark will help turn the area into Asia's cargo hub, owing to its vast space and geographic location.

A third runway will be constructed, depending on the level of activity and the demand. This will be in addition to the parallel runways that we already have here. We have room for expansion," Yap earlier said.

RP's first wind farm secures $29M in soft loan

NORTHWIND Power Development Corp. secured Tuesday a $29-million loan from ABN Amro to finance the completion of the country's first wind farm.

ABN Amro agreed to grant Northwind the 10-year loan at zero percent interest, with the Philippine Export-Import Credit Agency (PhilExim) acting as guarantor, Department of Energy legal adviser to the Secretary Jose Ildebrando Ambrosio said in interview late Wednesday.

The loan will fund the completion of a 25-megawatt wind turbine power plant in Bangui Bay, Ilocos Norte.

Prior to this additional funding, Danish government lending firm Danida extended an $11.2-million grant to finance the first phase of the wind power project, he said.

"The loan wouldn't have been possible without the Danida grant. (Granting the loan at zero interest) is a form of support from the Danish government, since the equipment supplier is also Danish," he told reporters.

He added that the local proponent of the project and the government did not need to shell out any counterpart funding as the PhilExim guarantee was enough to stand as the local counterpart contribution.

The project will break ground after Easter, and is expected to be completed on 2004, he said.

Danish firm NegMicon will be providing the necessary equipment for the wind farm.

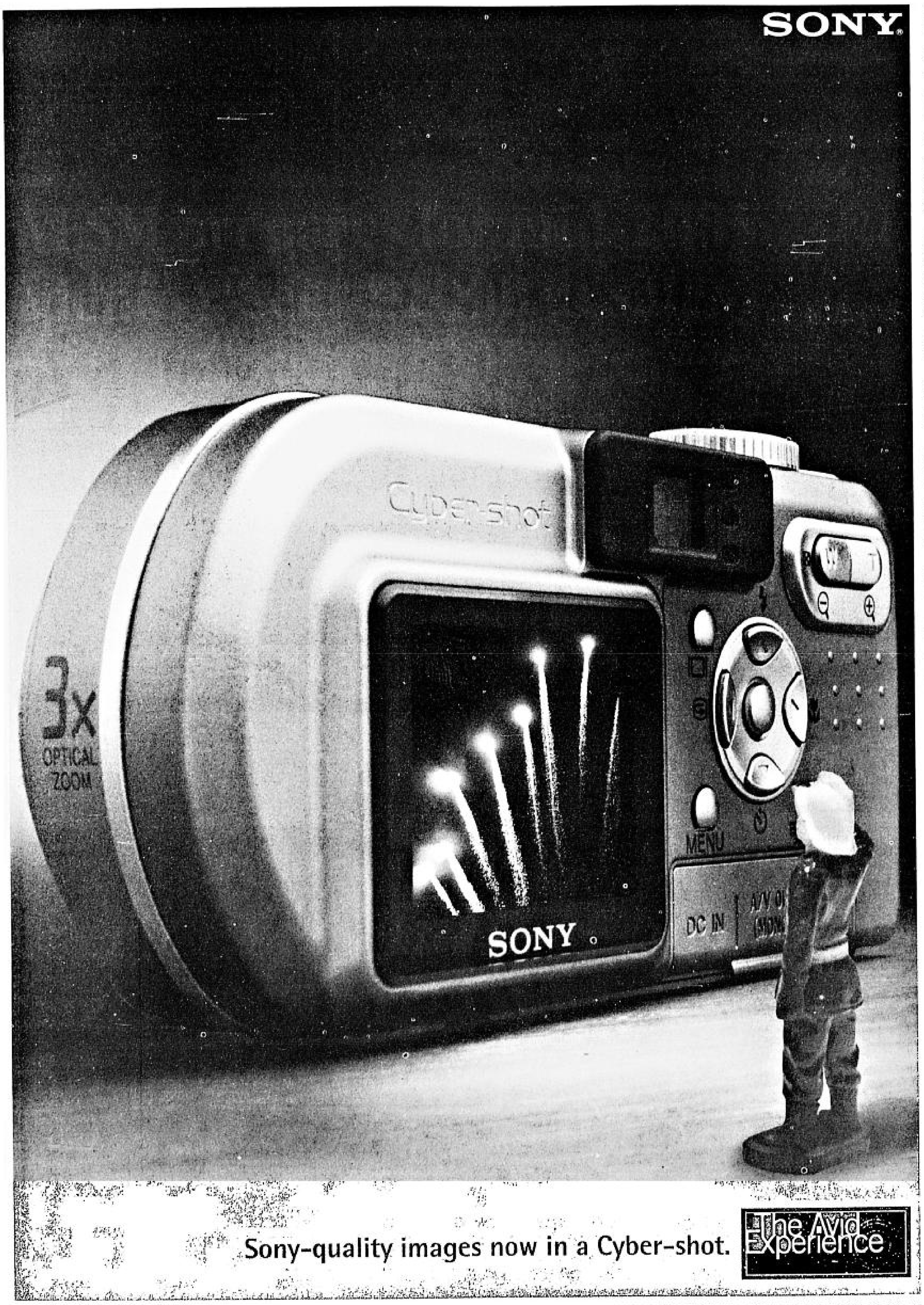
Northwind is led by Danish engineer Niels Jacobsen, who has been part of the operations of various power plants all over the country for more than 10 years now.

For the past four years, Ambrosio said Jacobsen and the rest of his Northwind team had been working on the wind power project's full development, starting with a year and a half of wind testing.

"Sensors were set up to see if the volume of wind is viable," he explained.

Electricity produced by the 25-MW wind turbine power plant would be contracted to the Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative (INEC), with which Northwind had a 20-year electricity sales agreement.

Abigail L. Ho



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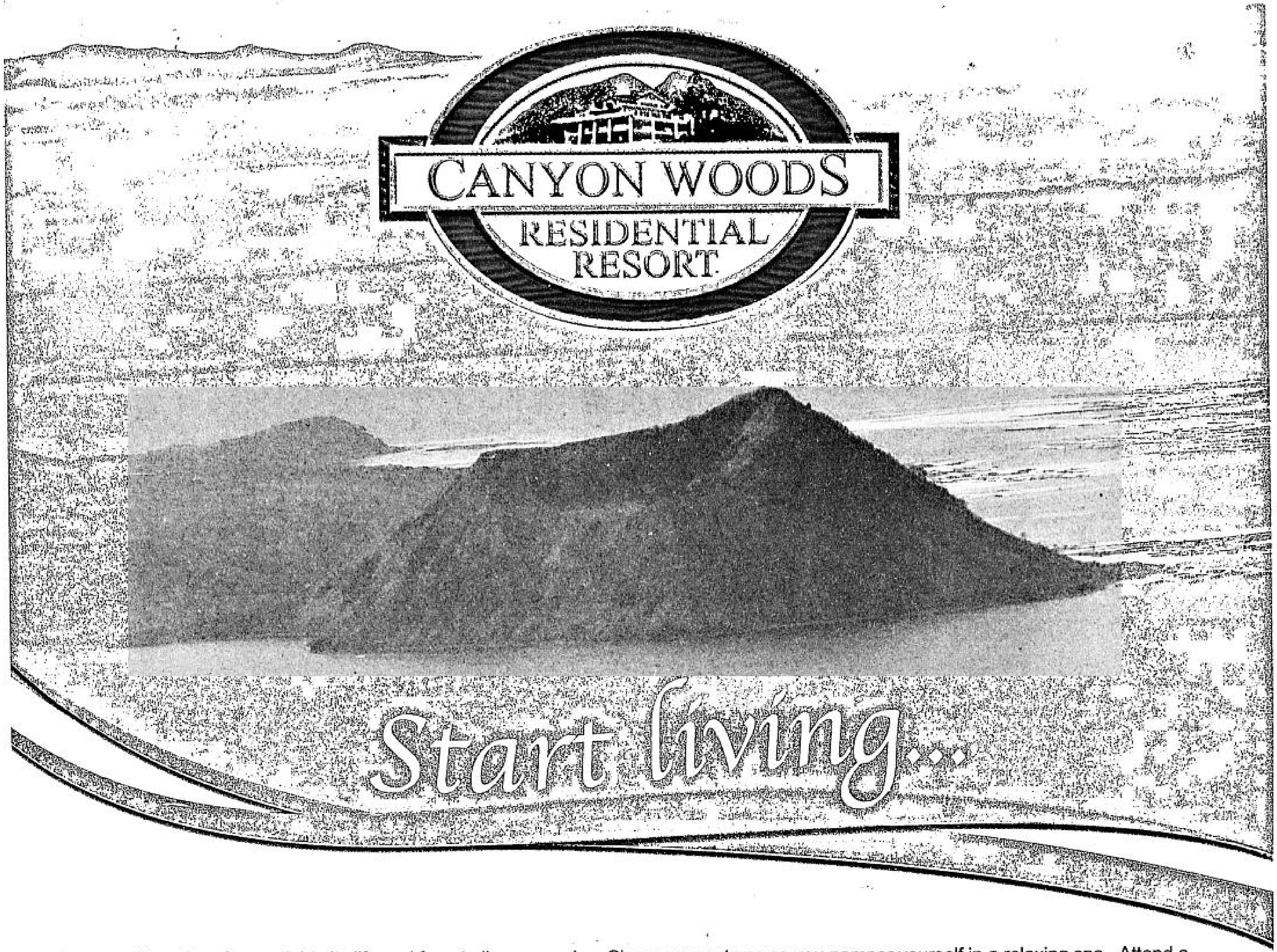

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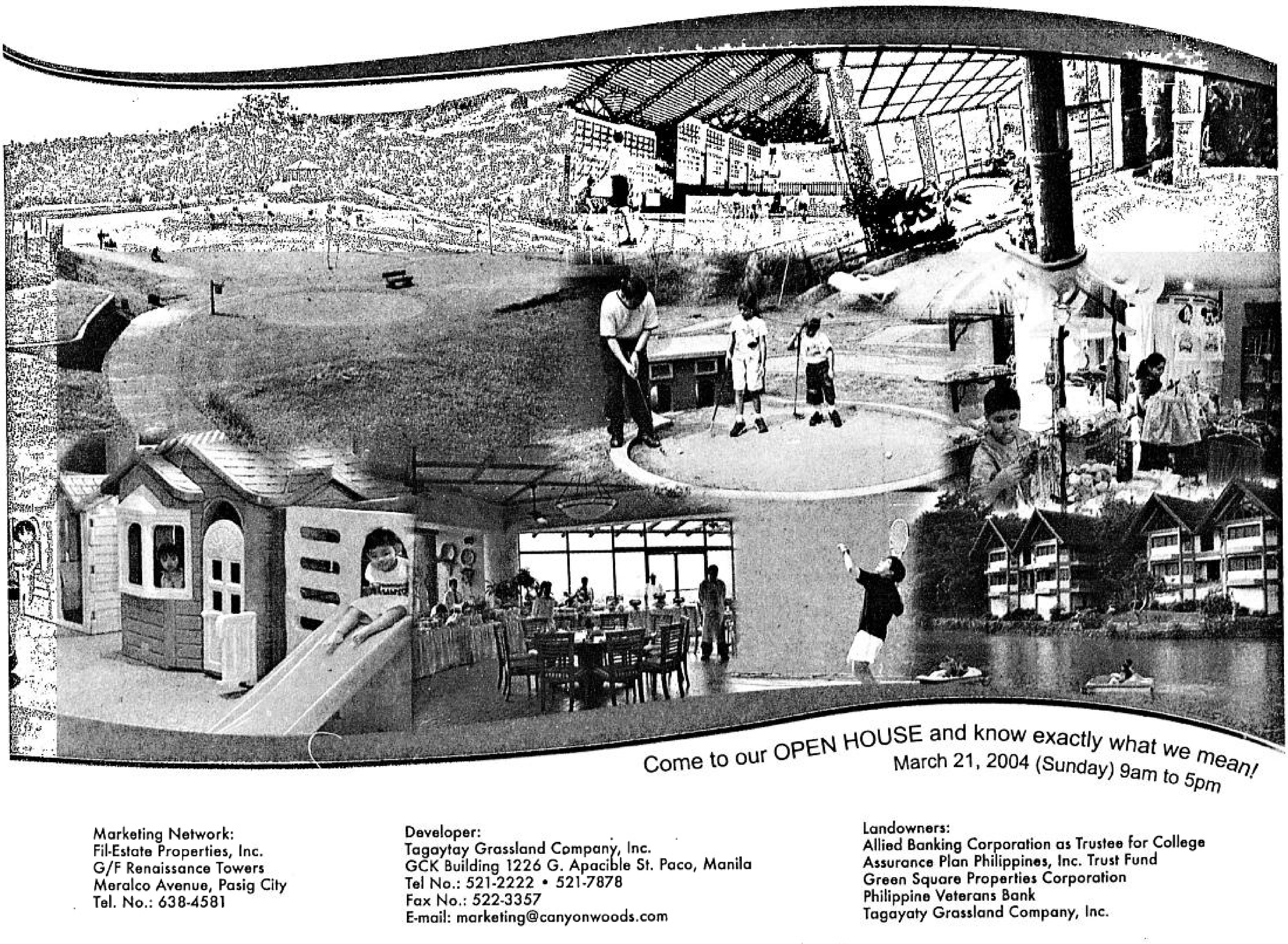

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Docs' advice to office workers: 'Banat buto'

By Tessa R. Salazar

DOCTORS want office workers to do a 15-minute exercise program every day, preferably after the 3 o'clock prayer. Their bone of contention: they foresee more musculoskeletal diseases in the next 10 years.

Doctors observe that as the population ages, lifestyles become more sedentary, which pave the way to muscle, ligament and bone problems.

Banat Buto, an exercise program intended for office, industrial and corporate workers who have to sit for eight hours or more, is meant to ward off the onset of musculoskeletal diseases among the Filipino working class.

The program consists of warmups and an exercise proper involving the whole body, such as the large muscles, the upper and lower extremities, and the back muscles and the spine. The exercise wraps up with a cool down for gradual return to a normal heart rate.

Doctors practicing physiatry are hoping that Banat Buto would become compulsory in all offices. In fact, they are pushing for such a presidential proclamation.

The field of physiatry examines and treats musculoskeletal disorders such as joint diseases, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, low back pains, spinal disorders, severe trauma to the extremities and disabling conditions in children.

Combining forces

Physiatry doctors belonging to the Philippine Academy of Rehabilitation Medicine, Philippine Orthopedic Association, Philippine Rheumatological Association, Osteoporosis Society of the Philippines Inc. and Arthritis Care Foundation combined forces for the Philippine Council of the Bone and Joint Decade.

The program is tentatively set for media launch on April 7. An instructive VCD for television and radio formats has been lined up.

"If people don't move much and they sit in the office the whole day, the first muscles that weaken are the ones in the stomach and at the back. And these are the ones that will cause the insidious onset of weakness and eventually could become a source of back and neck pains, among others," said Dr. Bee Giok Tan-Sales.

Excuse for leaves

Doctors observe that nowadays, back pain has become the second leading excuse for sick leaves in the world. It has been estimated that 25 percent of health expenditures in developing countries will be allotted for trauma-related care by 2010.

Fractures related to osteoporosis have almost doubled in number in the last decade: one in three women over 50 will suffer a fracture caused by osteoporosis.

Joint diseases account for half of all chronic conditions in persons aged 65 and above.

According to Tan-Sales, even young people experience back pain because of prolonged stay in front of their workstations. She said that 80 percent of the time, back pain occurs because of such a prolonged posture.

She added that back and muscle pains, if not addressed, may eventually lead to joint problems. If the joints are not supported by strong muscles, she said, the bones could be badly affected.

Doing it the right way

Dr. Romil Martinez stressed the importance of exercising the right way: applying gradual progression, proper exercise positions, warmups, stretching and cooling down.

Warmups and stretching are especially important to prepare the body for increased level of activity.

"If you're in an air-conditioned room, and you've been sitting there for eight hours, you must to stand up and stretch every 15 to 30 minutes to prevent back pains," said Martinez.

He stressed that the highest pressure on the back is when one is sitting. The least pressure is when one is lying down.

Outside the office, the body can also benefit from 30 minutes of dynamic exercises followed by a cool down.

First-timers can exercise for just 15 to 20 minutes, with the length gradually increasing. The ideal exercise frequency for beginners is three times a week for 20 to 30 minutes each.

"If you're the type who would really want to elevate the level of fitness, then prolong your time to 45 minutes to one hour three times a week," said Tan-Sales.

Why we remember

DISCOVER

Massie Santos Ballon

IN THE MOVIE "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" (I haven't seen it yet, but I took the plot summary from the official website), Jim Carrey's character, Joel, finds out that his soon-to-be-if-not-already ex-girlfriend Clementine (played by Kate Winslet) has had all the memories of their relationship and of him erased from her mind. Joel then contacts psychiatrist Dr. Howard Mierzwiak, the inventor of a memory-erasing process, to remove his own memories of Clementine.

The movie's trailer and website don't explain how Joel and Clementine's memories are erased, but it seems to involve being connected to a machine that looks like an electric chair connected to one of those big hair dryers in beauty parlors.

Having just read a paper explaining how long-term memories are stored in the brain, however, I think that the ability to erase memories would require a much smaller setup.

MIT study

The paper comes from the lab of neuroscientist Susumu Tonegawa at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and was published in the Feb. 6 issue of the journal Cell.

Dr. Tonegawa won the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1987 and is the founding director of the Picower Center for Learning and Memory at MIT.

According to his website, Dr. Tonegawa's lab focuses on "the molecular, cellular and neuronal circuitry mechanisms for acquisition, consolidation and recall of memory as well as the activity-dependent phase of neural development."

In other words, they look at the way we create and access memories on many different levels.

Using mice as a model organism, Tonegawa et al. have identified several enzymes and biochemical pathways involved in these processes.

Process of remembering

According to Tonegawa et al., the process of remembering is just like any other biochemical pathway in that it involves signaling specific cells and translating the messages delivered by the sense/s into a message that can be delivered by the nervous system to the brain for storage.

Pretend your brain is an office and you're working on a variety of projects with different deadlines. A report you were assigned first thing in the morning and which is due in an hour will probably never move more than three inches from your computer during the entire time you work on it. Like a short-term memory, it can be accessed quickly and referenced as needed.

On the other hand, projects that you've spent a number of weeks on are stored in files on your desk, in shelves and in your computer. To get the information you need, you have to look for the file in your computer or pull out the relevant data from the papers in the box by your desk. This need for storage is what distinguishes long-term memories from short-term memories.

As Tonegawa et al. describe in their paper the creation of long-term memory requires protein synthesis, which in my mind suggests that the newly created proteins serve as blank CDs on which the memory in question is burned.

Continuing this analogy further, the brain probably has CDRW-type proteins since people sometimes display selective memories, but I'm digressing.

Role of protein synthesis

Based on their studies and those done in other labs, Tonegawa et al. already knew about the role of protein synthesis in long-term memory storage; what they didn't know was how the process was activated.

Hypothesizing that the mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) enzyme was involved in the process, the researchers genetically modified mice and inactivated MAPK in their brains. Tests showed that these transgenic mice could only remember events for a few hours, while normal mice could remember things for several days. Further analysis revealed that the normal mice had better long-term memory than the transgenic mice.

Tonegawa et al. came to the conclusion that MAPK is an important enzyme which triggers protein synthesis for long-term memory formation. If the MAPK isn't activated, the memories can't be stored.

They're now trying to understand how neurons know which newly formed proteins are involved in storing a long-term memory and which are not.

If we know how we remember things, could we reverse the process and erase memories as effectively as the memory-erasing clinic in Jim Carrey's movie promises to do? Will we find out that ignorance really is bliss?

Watch the movie when it comes out and let me know what you think.

PHOTOAGING: THE COSMETIC EFFECTS OF SUN DAMAGE

By: Ma. Jasmin J. Jamora, MD, DPDS

Ever wonder why some people look older than others?

Photoaging or photodamage refers to degenerative skin changes due to long-term and repeated exposure to the damaging effects of ultraviolet (UV) sun rays. This is seen as coarse wrinkling, a sallow (dull or yellow) complexion, skin roughness, patchy dark pigmentation, apparent facial blood vessels (telangiectasias), and loss of skin tone and elasticity, seen as sagging or laxity.

All the damaging effects of prolonged sun exposure can be minimized by photoprotection. These include:

- Sun avoidance between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. when the sun's ultraviolet rays are at their harshest.
- Use of protective clothing and wide-brimmed hat.
- Proper and regular use of sunscreens -- daily use with an SPF of 15 to 20, and an SPF of 20 to 30 or higher when prolonged sun exposure is expected.

Use of sunscreen even at a young age can result in an 80% reduction of photodamage and occurrence of skin cancers.

While photoaged skin has been shown to naturally repair itself when UV exposures are stopped, many chemical compounds in cosmetic and prescription grade creams have been found to help repair or reverse sun damage in skin. Regular use has been shown to smooth skin texture, reduce wrinkles and improve skin discoloration, as well as exfoliate skin.

Cosmeceutical products incorporate active chemicals into cosmetics and include the following:

Tretinoin and other vitamin A derivatives, like retinol, are the most widely used antioxidants.

Hydroxyacids which include: Alpha-hydroxyacids like glycolic acid, lactic acid, citric acid, mandelic acid, malic and tartaric acid, decrease signs of aging, help make skin look smoother, and more uniform by causing exfoliation, and improving elastic fibers and collagen density. Alphahydroxyacids (AHAs) also have a bleaching effect.

Beta-hydroxyacids, in particular salicylic acid, also helps exfoliate skin.

Other vitamins like C and E, panthenol and niacinamide (both-members of the vitamins B complex) and other antioxidants like lipoic acid, ubiquinone (better known as coenzyme Q), glutathione, peroxidase, catalase, melatonin, N-acetylcysteine and glycopyranosides have shown antioxidant activity in some studies.

Green tea, part of a group of antioxidants known as epicatechins, and soybeans have been shown to be effective as good topical or oral antioxidants Kinerase (furfuryladenine) is a new product that claims anti-aging effects Emerging as an important anti-aging ingredient are copper peptides

Bleaching products are used to treat skin pigmentation problems, and work by reducing amounts of melanin in the skin The most common are hydroquinone, vitamin C, tretinoin, azelaic acid, and kojic acid. Other newer bleaching agents include arbutin, licorice, mulberry compound and N-acetylcystein, however larger clinical studies need to be done to prove their effectivity

When shopping for these products, look closely at the ingredient label and do careful research Consulting a dermatologist is still the best option as they have a wide armamentarium with which to treat photoaging Look for a dermatologist member of the Philippine Dermatological Society near you through (632) 727-7309 or E-mail Address: pds@pacific.net.ph

This health information is brought to you by Skin, Hair & Nail Health Education Program (SKINHELP) of the PDS through an educational grant from Johnson & Johnson (Philippines), Inc

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

For love of kids with facial deformities

Text and photos
by Charles E. Buban

DR. Abdessamad Chlihi is a plastic surgeon from Casablanca, Morocco. Marcial Nebria is a Filipino nurse working in a London hospital. Nikki Zeta-Tolentino is a speech pathologists based at the UP-Philippine General Hospital.

The lives of these three people may be worlds apart but once a year, they intersect in Davao City where the Mindanao leg of Operation Smile mission is located.

Chlihi (pronounced "lee-hee"), 36, joined the mission in 2001 and since then has flown to the southern province in the hope of helping more children with cleft lip and cleft palate.

"There are just so many of them, but if we go on with the mission, we will eradicate it one day," he says.

It is estimated that in developing countries like the Philippines, the number of babies born with this deformity is one in 500 to 600.

Many sacrifices

Chlihi's coming to the Philippines entailed a lot of sacrifice: he had to endure four flight transfers and more than 24 hours of travel.

"This country has a special place in my heart, and I already have so many doctor friends here," says Chlihi, who took his medical residency in the Philippines in 2002.

Nebria shares this same reason, although being a native of Tagum City, Davao del Norte, going to Davao City is some sort of a homecoming.

"More than seeing friends, I'm proud to share my skills with my province mates," says Nebria who started volunteering for Operation Smile in 1996.

Sharing knowledge

Tolentino, on the other hand, wants to share his knowledge and expertise as there are very few who specialize in the field he is in.

"Parents should realize that even if their children are operated on (for cleft lip and cleft palate), their child will continue to speak the way he or she grew up with," says Tolentino.

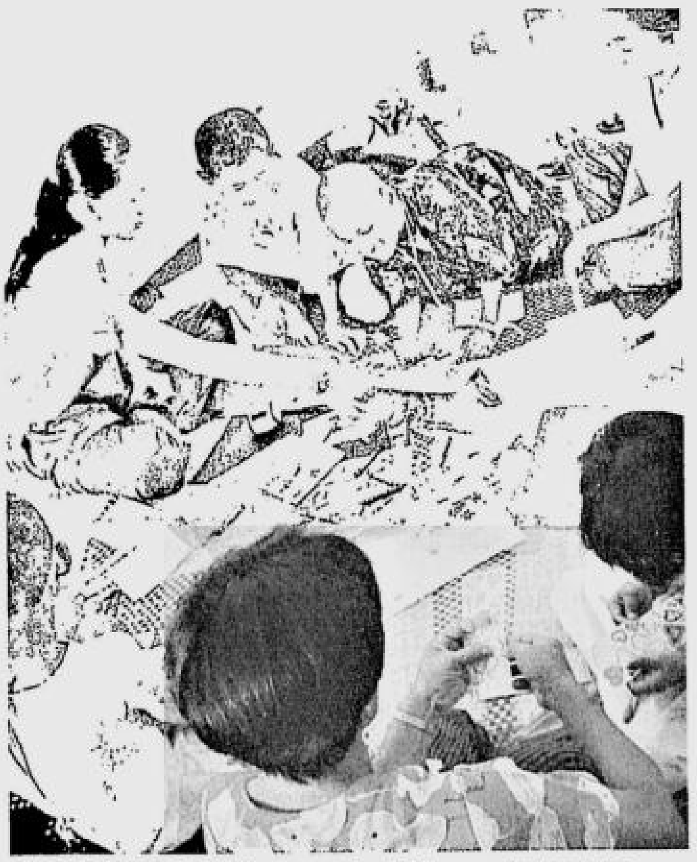
During the mission, Tolentino gives parents teaching materials like word exercises that they must train their child with to enhance oral movement and encourage vocalization.

Tolentino says a mission like Operation Smile is a gathering of experts.

"Operation Smile addresses different aspects: while the surgical operation heals the physical deformities, others in our team deal with the psychological side of healing," he explains.

This is why an Operation Smile medical team is always composed of plastic surgeons, anesthesiologists, dentists and orthodontists, speech therapists, pediatricians, nurses and a host of other volunteers who provide support to the medical teams.

The Philippines is Operation Smile's largest beneficiary and in the last 22 years, the mission has treated some 14,000 Filipino children.



BEFORE UNDERGOING surgery, the children are first sent to a playroom to calm their nerves.

OPERATION Smile gives hope to children with cleft palates and cleft lips.

Acupuncture best cure for migraines

ACUPUNCTURE is the best treatment for people who suffer from chronic headaches, according to the largest study into the effectiveness of this therapy for treating migraines.

The study, led by Andrew Vickers, a researcher at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, found that the severity of headaches of patients who received up to 12 acupuncture treatments per week fell by 34 percent over the year, compared to a decline of 16 percent among those who received conventional headache medication.

They also experienced on the average 22 fewer days of headache per year, used 15 percent less medication, made 25 percent fewer visits to their doctor and were absent from work through sickness 15 percent less often than other patients.

"Acupuncture leads to persisting, clinically relevant benefits for primary care patients with chronic headache, particularly migraine," the authors say.

The findings should be taken into account by policymakers when they have to assess the most cost-effective way of treating patients, they added.

AFP

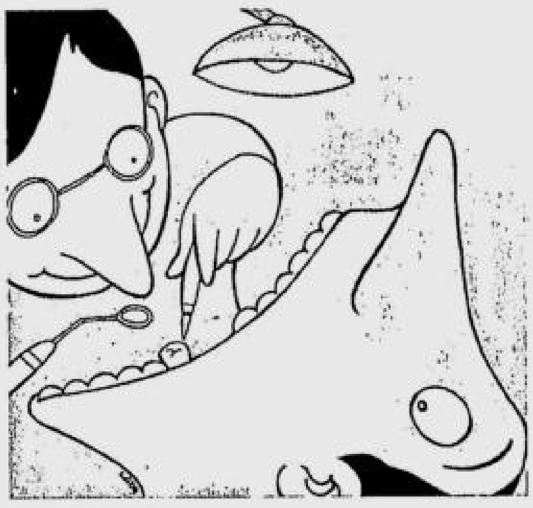
Why extracting wisdom teeth is often wise

By Charles E. Buban

WISDOM teeth are said to appear on the "age of gathering wisdom," thus the nickname. However, these third molars actually are no different from any other tooth except that they are the last teeth to appear.

"The truth is, we don't have much use for them. Most people have no room [in their mouths] for wisdom teeth, and the teeth often don't work properly," says Dr. Steve Mark Gan of Gan Advanced Osseointegration Center.

Even when there are no obvious reasons for their removal, in most cases it's much better to have the wisdom teeth removed before they could cause serious problems, explains Gan.



Younger, better

While there are no hard-and-fast rules regarding the age by which a person's wisdom teeth should be extracted, as a rule of thumb, the younger one is, the better, since there are usually fewer complications involved.

Extraction is much easier when the roots of the teeth are not yet fully formed and the bone surrounding the teeth are less dense.

"Surgery usually takes an average of 20 to 45 minutes for four wisdom teeth, under proper anesthesia," says Gan.

Recovery time varies and it may take three to four weeks for the operation to heal completely.

Usually, there aren't any obvious signs that will tell you it's time to have the wisdom teeth removed.

Says Gan: "But in some cases, people may experience pain, swelling of the face or gum line, bad breath, infection in the mouth, or shifting or crowding of teeth. This is a sign for us dentists to have their mouth checked for possible problems."

In most cases, the wisdom teeth are impacted, meaning they're trapped completely or partially below the gum line.

"The teeth are unable to move into a proper position in the mouth: they may be turned sideways or tilted or too far out of line with the rest of the teeth," Gan says.

Impacted third molars can cause problems that merit their removal as there may be bacteria and plaque buildup, cyst development (a fluid-filled sac), tumor development, infection, jaw and gum disease.

Sitting ducks for cavity

Sometimes, even when a wisdom tooth manages to erupt above the gum line, it may not be functional and would have to be removed because the tooth beside it hasn't come in or is missing. This causes the patient to bite into the gum.

Hygiene can also be a problem since wisdom teeth may be difficult to clean and floss. Gan describes these teeth as sitting ducks for cavities.

However, it's not always necessary to part with one's wisdom teeth.

"If the teeth poke above the gum line and the person is able to keep them clean and experiences no pain or inflammation, then it would be best to leave them in," Gan suggests.

He, however, says the teeth should be checked regularly by the dentist for any changes.

The Secret to Fairer, More Radiant Skin

Sun exposure results in photodamage which comes in the form of dark brown spots, blotching, uneven skin tone, and even premature wrinkles.

What many people don't know is that photodamage is not just a result of direct exposure from the sun (UVB) causing sunburn, but can be a result of indirect sun exposure (UVA) that penetrates deeper into the skin, damaging collagen and elastin fibers that keep skin firm and elastic.

While the effect may not be immediate, this surfaces later on in life. UVA rays can penetrate through windows, therefore you may be exposed to the harmful rays of the sun even if indoors.

To keep your skin looking fair, you need to protect yourself everyday from the harmful rays of the sun (both direct and indirect), and use a smart whitening system that effectively works on delivering more radiant skin.

Neutrogena, a trusted name in dermatologic care, introduces a *Fine Fairness Regimen* that includes **Fine Fairness UV Block SPF 30, Fine Fairness UV Compact Powder and Fine Fairness Essence.**

Start everyday with **Neutrogena Fine Fairness UV Block SPF30**, an effective sunblock and moisturizer in one that provides UVA, UVB, and IR protection. It also contains Vitamin E and Pro-Vitamin B5 that soothes, moisturizes, and softens skin.

Neutrogena Fine Fairness UV Compact Powder, applied any time during the day, blends evenly with skin to hide imperfections for beautifully natural-looking coverage. It contains Vitamin C and licorice extract, plus sunscreens to help care for skin against harmful UV rays and prevent the formation of sunspots.

Neutrogena Fine Fairness Essence, an intensive whitening treatment contains Retinol (pure Vitamin A), Vitamin C and anti-oxidants. Best applied at night, this breakthrough formula exhibits a "smart" whitening action, working harder on dark spots where more whitening is needed and less on the unblemished areas for more even-toned, fair skin.

This patented formula enhances cell renewal for more radiant skin, and helps reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

Try this **Fine Fairness Regimen** and see visible results of fairer, more radiant skin.

ADVT

How health-savvy are you?

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

LIKE everyone else these days, I devour each piece of health news as it comes hot off the lab reports and consumer media. However, they are often contradictory.

In the past decade, fat was thought to be the culprit, and carbos the saintly ones. Now we learn that certain kinds of fat (omega-3 and omega-9) are not only not bad, they are even beneficial.

As for protein, I despair. Half the diet books in stores tout going all-out for protein (Atkins, Zone, etc.), while the other half still sticks with traditional complex carbos.

Sigh. If the experts cannot agree among themselves, what are we lay people supposed to do?

But quick answers are never the fad in science. In fact, it is the very nature of the scientific method which gives rise to these confusing reports.

Add to existing knowledge

The Asian Food Information Center (Afic) in Singapore [info@afic.org] reminds us that scientists see each study as a small addition to existing knowledge. Due to the complicated nature of diet and health, each researcher usually only chooses to work on a specific topic. As different scientists may take various approaches to study a particular subject, results often do not coincide.

"Scientists often act like pathfinders through uncharted territory. They may take different routes, some of which result in dead ends and require long detours to get back on track. Even after the facts are known, they usually only comprise one part of a larger story, requiring research in other areas to shed more light on the issue. In other cases, scientists sometimes review old research with the aid of new information or technologies and may come to a different conclusion than that previously believed to be true."

That is why scientists undergo peer review in journals (as do other disciplines). Theories are advanced, checked, verified, subjected to experiment and then verified again and again. Except for a few exciting Eureka! moments, scientific work is much like any other toil—tedious, painstaking, lengthy research.

As for consumer confusion, media are often to blame. Not content with eye-catching political and entertainment news, reporters exaggerate health claims or even report preliminary findings as conclusive.

Worst of all, in lengthy reports with a lot of caveats, many health reporters skip the boring portions and instead zero in on a few headline-making sound bites. Aside from being unintentionally sensational reporting, this is also grossly inaccurate and misleading.

Moreover, journalists reporting on health and science often have little background to understand the details and assess the significance of reports which come their way.

Afic illustrates: "Take epidemiological studies, which form the mainstay of many food and health studies reported in the media. Basically, epidemiological studies look at populations to investigate potential associations between aspects of health (such as cancer and heart disease) and diet, lifestyle, genetics or other factors within the population. As epidemiological studies are often observational in nature, their outcomes need to be verified with other types of research such as intervention or clinical studies.

Conclusion still not correct

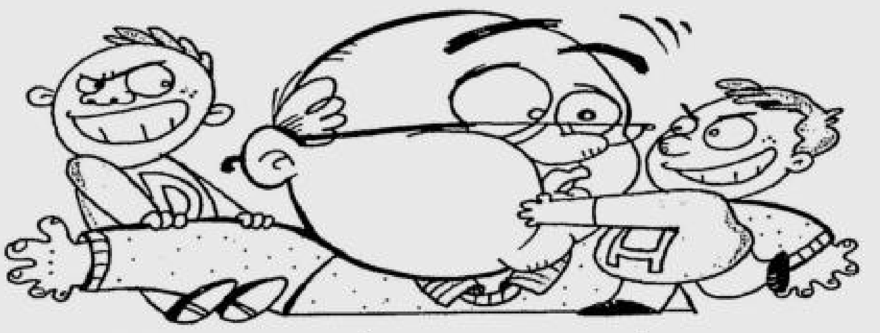
"While epidemiological studies may show association or correlation, they do not establish cause and effect. For example, comparing per capita meat consumption between various countries may reveal an association between eating meat and certain types of cancer. However, one could not correctly conclude that eating meat causes the cancers, because other unrelated factors in the diets of meat eaters (such as total fat, calories or the lower levels of vegetable consumption) may be the true cause, and meat consumption is simply a reflection of other dietary habits."

So what should we do then? Be savvy in health news. Check out the population that was studied. Are they laboratory rats, American males or Asian teenagers? Can the findings be extrapolated to us?

Check out the experiment. Who were the researchers? How long did the project take? Was the study published in a reputable journal?

Most of all, be wary of "gee-whiz" results, and do not make drastic changes in your diet (such as eliminating a whole food category like carbos) before seeking advice from a doctor.

E-mail the author at blessbook@yahoo.com.



Treating hypertension and preventing diabetes

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

MEDICAL FILES

MALTA—This island in the Mediterranean has been known as one of the oldest cradles of civilization and the enigma of history, which makes it an appropriate venue for an important scientific symposium to discuss what is probably the oldest and enigmatic cardiometabolic problems known to mankind: hypertension and diabetes.

Hypertension and diabetes are well-known risk factors which can cause cardiovascular complications such as heart attack and stroke. Previously, they had been treated as separate risk factors. But now, they're considered part and parcel of one common syndrome and might have the same basic cause.

A hypertensive may ultimately become diabetic, and a diabetic may also subsequently present with an elevated blood pressure.

One positive development in hypertension treatment is that some drugs used to control hypertension might also prevent the development of diabetes.

Diabetes prevention

One such landmark clinical trial showing this finding was discussed here by cardiovascular experts from all over the world.

The trial Invest (International Verpamil-Trandolapril Study) has shown that in the group treated with the calcium antagonist verapamil, there were significantly less people who subsequently developed diabetes. This is the first calcium antagonist that has been shown to have potential beneficial effect in preventing diabetes.

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is now considered a worldwide epidemic. The World Health Organization estimates that 300 million people worldwide will have diabetes by the year 2025. The situation becomes more complicated if the patient has both diabetes and high blood pressure.

Hypertension and diabetes may have a common pathway that is causing them: insulin resistance.

DM is a metabolic disorder characterized by high blood sugar levels. Normally, the food we eat is digested and converted into glucose, or the form of sugar in the blood. Glucose is the body's main fuel source. For our body to be able to use glucose for growth and energy, it needs to get into the cells. Insulin, produced by the pancreas, is needed for this process.

Like a key

Insulin resistance makes it difficult for the body to metabolize glucose. Think of insulin as a key that opens the door for glucose to enter the cells. In diabetes, the pancreas produces little or no insulin and/or the cells do not respond appropriately to the insulin that is present, producing some sort of a resistant state.

In DM, the keys are either missing or don't fit the locks, so glucose can't go into the cells. Glucose thus builds up in the blood.

Insulin resistance has also been shown to have an adverse effect on the blood vessels leading to cardiovascular problems, including high blood pressure. It plays a significant role in atherosclerosis, which is the progressive narrowing of the blood vessels.

The most common form of DM is type 2 diabetes. About 90 to 95 percent of people with DM have type 2 diabetes (previously known as adult-onset or noninsulin-dependent diabetes). About a third of them don't even know they have the disease. More than 50 percent of newly diagnosed type 2 DM patients already have coronary heart disease (CHD) or blockages in their heart arteries.

People with type 2 diabetes are three to four times more likely to have a heart attack than those without DM. About half of these heart attacks are fatal.

Patients with DM therefore die primarily from CHD.

Risk reduction

Recent studies have shown that certain individuals who are at high risk of developing DM can reduce their risk of having diabetes by as much as 58 percent if they reduce their fat intake, lose weight, increase dietary fiber and exercise regularly (more than 150 minutes/week).

Having diabetes is certainly bad news and it's best to prevent it. It won't be a surprise if doctors start prescribing some antihypertensive medications like verapamil, angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers to prevent it even in patients who are not hypertensive yet.

Series No.4

Personal and psychological costs of Erectile Dysfunction

Most men experience occasional erectile failure at some time during their lives, usually as a result of fatigue, temporary stress or excessive alcohol consumption. Temporary loss of erectile capability is not something to worry about. However, when the condition persists or interferes with a man's normal sexual activity, medical advice should be sought.

Millions of men worldwide suffer from Erectile Dysfuction (ED), the inability to achieve a hard, erect penis sufficient for sexual intercourse. For the ED sufferers, this creates physical and mental stress that affect their relationship with their sexual partners, families, friends, officemates and associates.

The embarrassment that comes with being discovered they have erectile problems may often be the reason ED sufferers avoid seeing a doctor or a health professional for proper diagnosis and appropriate treatment. They would rather be silent about their physical condition than be the butt of jokes or object of ridicule.

Since they are ashamed to see a doctor, they may try taking aphrodisiacs or substances that increase sexual desire in the hope that their erectile problem will be solved. This approach, however, may even be detrimental to their overall physical well-being. And majority of medical doctors frown on this idea.

Erectile Dysfunction is often assumed to be a part of the aging process. However, studies have shown that ED is not always associated with aging. ED is caused by physical and psychological factors, or a combination of both. ED may occur as a result of specific illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, or as a result of prostate or colon operations. Regardless of the primary causes, ED can have a negative impact on self-esteem, quality of life and interpersonal relationship.

Regardless of the causes, Erectile Dysfunction can have a negative impact on self-esteem.

Older men have been conditioned to accept ED as a result of progressive aging for which little or nothing can be done about it. Being the case, there is an urgent need to provide accurate information on sexual functions and the management of dysfunction to affected males and their partners.

With the advances in the treatment of Erectile Dysfunction, ED sufferers are now encouraged to come out in the open and seek medical advice for their physical condition. They need not suffer in silence because of the negative impact of ED on self-esteem. ED is a treatable physical condition.

Males exhibiting symptoms suggestive of Erectile Dysfunction are advised to see a doctor or a health professional for proper diagnosis and appropriate treatment. (*Next week, Help is available to Erectile Dysfunction sufferers.*)

(For more information, log on to www.lilly.com)

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Why extracting wisdom teeth is often wise

By Charles E. Buban

WISDOM teeth are said to appear on the "age of gathering wisdom," thus the nickname. However, these third molars actually are no different from any other tooth except that they are the last teeth to appear.

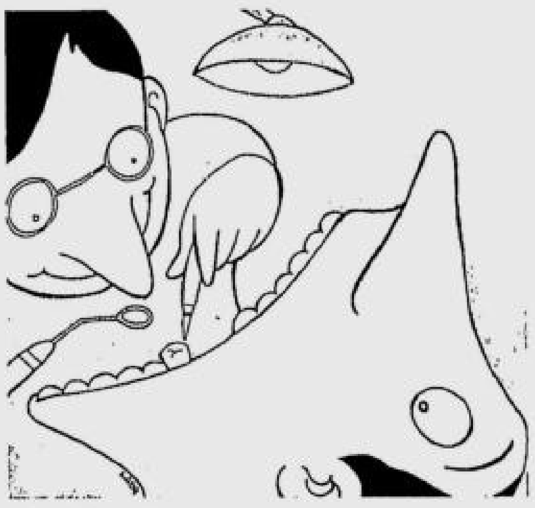
"The truth is, we don't have much use for them. Most people have no room [in their mouths] for wisdom teeth, and the teeth often don't work properly," says Dr. Steve Mark Gan of Gan Advanced Osseointegration Center.

Even when there are no obvious reasons for their removal, in most cases it's much better to have the wisdom teeth removed before they could cause serious problems, explains Gan.

Younger, better

While there are no hard-and-fast rules regarding the age by which a person's wisdom teeth should be extracted, as a rule of thumb, the younger one is, the better, since there are usually fewer complications involved.

Extraction is much easier when the roots of the teeth are not yet fully formed and the bone surrounding the teeth are less dense.



"Surgery usually takes an average of 20 to 45 minutes for four wisdom teeth, under proper anesthesia," says Gan.

Recovery time varies and it may take three to four weeks for the operation to heal completely.

Usually, there aren't any obvious signs that will tell you it's time to have the wisdom teeth removed.

Says Gan: "But in some cases, people may experience pain, swelling of the face or gum line, bad breath, infection in the mouth, or shifting or crowding of teeth. This is a sign for us dentists to have their mouth checked for possible problems."

In most cases, the wisdom teeth are impacted, meaning they're trapped completely or partially below the gum line.

"The teeth are unable to move into a proper position in the mouth: they may be turned sideways or tilted or too far out of line with the rest of the teeth," Gan says.

Impacted third molars can cause problems that merit their removal as there may be bacteria and plaque buildup, cyst development (a fluid-filled sac), tumor development, infection, jaw and gum disease.

Sitting ducks for cavity

Sometimes, even when a wisdom tooth manages to erupt above the gum line, it may not be functional and would have to be removed because the tooth beside it hasn't come in or is missing. This causes the patient to bite into the gum.

Hygiene can also be a problem since wisdom teeth may be difficult to clean and floss. Gan describes these teeth as sitting ducks for cavities.

However, it's not always necessary to part with one's wisdom teeth.

"If the teeth poke above the gum line and the person is able to keep them clean and experiences no pain or inflammation, then it would be best to leave them in," Gan suggests.

He, however, says the teeth should be checked regularly by the dentist for any changes.

How health-savvy are you?

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

LIKE everyone else these days, I devour each piece of health news as it comes hot off the lab reports and consumer media. However, they are often contradictory.

In the past decade, fat was thought to be the culprit, and carbos the saintly ones. Now we learn that certain kinds of fat (omega-3 and omega-9) are not only not bad, they are even beneficial.

As for protein, I despair. Half the diet books in stores tout going all-out for protein (Atkins, Zone, etc.), while the other half still sticks with traditional complex carbos.

Sigh. If the experts cannot agree among themselves, what are we lay people supposed to do?

But quick answers are never the fad in science. In fact, it is the very nature of the scientific method which gives rise to these confusing reports.

Add to existing knowledge

The Asian Food Information Center (Afic) in Singapore [info@afic.org] reminds us that scientists see each study as a small addition to existing knowledge. Due to the complicated nature of diet and health, each researcher usually only chooses to work on a specific topic. As different scientists may take various approaches to study a particular subject, results often do not coincide.

"Scientists often act like pathfinders through uncharted territory. They may take different routes, some of which result in dead ends and require long detours to get back on track. Even after the facts are known, they usually only comprise one part of a larger story, requiring research in other areas to shed more light on the issue. In other cases, scientists sometimes review old research with the aid of new information or technologies and may come to a different conclusion than that previously believed to be true."

That is why scientists undergo peer review in journals (as do other disciplines). Theories are advanced, checked, verified, subjected to experiment and then verified again and again. Except for a few exciting Eureka! moments, scientific work is much like any other toil—tedious, painstaking, lengthy research.

As for consumer confusion, media are often to blame. Not content with eye-catching political and entertainment news, reporters exaggerate health claims or even report preliminary findings as conclusive.

Worst of all, in lengthy reports with a lot of caveats, many health reporters skip the boring portions and instead zero in on a few headline-making sound bites. Aside from being unintentionally sensational reporting, this is also grossly inaccurate and misleading.

Moreover, journalists reporting on health and science often have little background to understand the details and assess the significance of reports which come their way.

Afic illustrates: "Take epidemiological studies, which form the mainstay of many food and health studies reported in the media. Basically, epidemiological studies look at populations to investigate potential associations between aspects of health (such as cancer and heart disease) and diet, lifestyle, genetics or other factors within the population. As epidemiological studies are often observational in nature, their outcomes need to be verified with other types of research such as intervention or clinical studies.

Conclusion still not correct

"While epidemiological studies may show association or correlation, they do not establish cause and effect. For example, comparing per capita meat consumption between various countries may reveal an association between eating meat and certain types of cancer. However, one could not correctly conclude that eating meat causes the cancers, because other unrelated factors in the diets of meat eaters (such as total fat, calories or the lower levels of vegetable consumption) may be the true cause, and meat consumption is simply a reflection of other dietary habits."

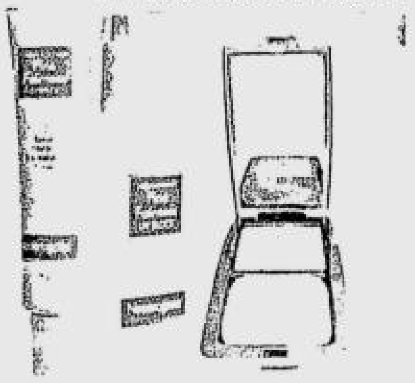
So what should we do then? Be savvy in health news. Check out the population that was studied. Are they laboratory rats, American males or Asian teenagers? Can the findings be extrapolated to us?

Check out the experiment. Who were the researchers? How long did the project take? Was the study published in a reputable journal?

Most of all, be wary of "gee-whiz" results, and do not make drastic changes in your diet (such as eliminating a whole food category like carbos) before seeking advice from a doctor.

E-mail the author at blessbook@yahoo.com.

The Secret to Fairer, More Radiant Skin



Sun exposure results in photodamage which comes in the form of dark brown spots, blotching, uneven skin tone, and even premature wrinkles.

What many people don't know is that photodamage is not just a result of direct exposure from the sun (UVB) causing sunburn, but can be a result of indirect sun exposure (UVA) that penetrates deeper into the skin, damaging collagen and elastin fibers that keep skin firm and elastic.

While the effect may not be immediate, this surfaces later on in life. UVA rays can penetrate through windows, therefore you may be exposed to the harmful rays of the sun even if indoors.

To keep your skin looking fair, you need to protect yourself everyday from the harmful rays of the sun (both direct and indirect), and use a smart whitening system that effectively works on delivering more radiant skin.

Neutrogena, a trusted name in dermatologic care, introduces a *Fine Fairness Regimen* that includes **Fine Fairness UV Block SPF 30, Fine Fairness UV Compact Powder and Fine Fairness Essence.**

Start everyday with **Neutrogena Fine Fairness UV Block SPF30**, an effective sunblock and moisturizer in one that provides UVA, UVB, and IR protection. It also contains Vitamin E and Pro-Vitamin B5 that soothes, moisturizes, and softens skin.

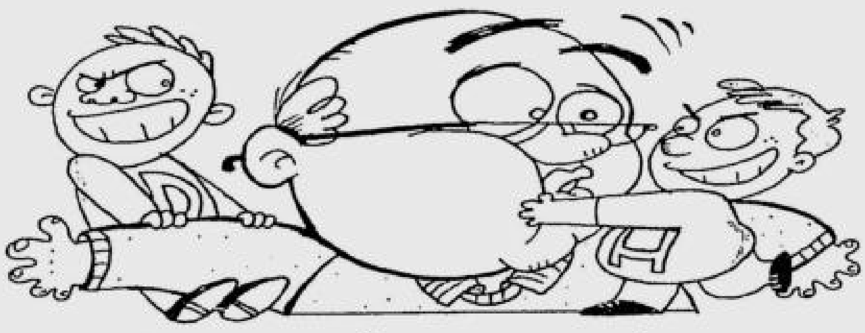
Neutrogena Fine Fairness UV Compact Powder, applied any time during the day, blends evenly with skin to hide imperfections for beautifully natural-looking coverage. It contains Vitamin C and licorice extract, plus sunscreens to help care for skin against harmful UV rays and prevent the formation of sunspots.

Neutrogena Fine Fairness Essence, an intensive whitening treatment contains Retinol (pure Vitamin A), Vitamin C and anti-oxidants. Best applied at night, this breakthrough formula exhibits a "smart" whitening action, working harder on dark spots where more whitening is needed and less on the unblemished areas for more even-toned, fair skin.

This patented formula enhances cell renewal for more radiant skin, and helps reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

Try this **Fine Fairness Regimen** and see visible results of fairer, more radiant skin.

ADVT



Treating hypertension and preventing diabetes

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

MEDICAL FILES

MALTA—This island in the Mediterranean has been known as one of the oldest cradles of civilization and the enigma of history, which makes it an appropriate venue for an important scientific symposium to discuss what is probably the oldest and enigmatic cardiometabolic problems known to mankind: hypertension and diabetes.

Hypertension and diabetes are well-known risk factors which can cause cardiovascular complications such as heart attack and stroke. Previously, they had been treated as separate risk factors. But now, they're considered part and parcel of one common syndrome and might have the same basic cause.

A hypertensive may ultimately become diabetic, and a diabetic may also subsequently present with an elevated blood pressure.

One positive development in hypertension treatment is that some drugs used to control hypertension might also prevent the development of diabetes.

Diabetes prevention

One such landmark clinical trial showing this finding was discussed here by cardiovascular experts from all over the world.

The trial Invest (International Verpamil-Trandolapril Study) has shown that in the group treated with the calcium antagonist verapamil, there were significantly less people who subsequently developed diabetes. This is the first calcium antagonist that has been shown to have potential beneficial effect in preventing diabetes.

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is now considered a worldwide epidemic. The World Health Organization estimates that 300 million people worldwide will have diabetes by the year 2025. The situation becomes more complicated if the patient has both diabetes and high blood pressure.

Hypertension and diabetes may have a common pathway that is causing them: insulin resistance.

DM is a metabolic disorder characterized by high blood sugar levels. Normally, the food we eat is digested and converted into glucose, or the form of sugar in the blood. Glucose is the body's main fuel source. For our body to be able to use glucose for growth and energy, it needs to get into the cells. Insulin, produced by the pancreas, is needed for this process.

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Series No.4

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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Southridge at 25

TO SUM up the challenges of bringing up children in this day and age, a favorite author of mine made fitting mention in her book, a wise African proverb: "It takes a village to raise a child". After the parents, I've always believed that other members of the community contribute to ensuring a promising future for the youth. It takes effective leadership, law enforcement, good doctors and professionals. But most importantly, it takes good teachers and a good school.

Immersed with the proverb, I could not help but think of my alma mater Southridge. Like any other alumnus, I look back with nostalgia at this private school for boys, where I had not only finished elementary and high school, but had also gotten prepared for life.

I had the chance to come home to Southridge for a visit very recently. While the school has changed and grown much more since I left, it was encouraging to realize that the warm family atmosphere and the air of excellence are still there. Many cherished things have not changed, as I once again walked through the buildings, and chatted with teachers, parents, and even other members of the alumni.

When I first entered Southridge in Grade 5, I immediately noticed and appreciated its passion for academic excellence. While the enrollment has grown over the years, it is remarkable to know that the high standards continue to be uncompromised, keeping up with global education trends. Attention to students by teachers is still at its best, as the ratio of students to teachers continues to be at 13 to 1. Each section has been maintained at an average of 31 students. Teachers are still at the head of their courses, thanks to the strict standards and continuous professional development of the faculty. Facilities and infrastructure are in top shape, and are continually upgraded to keep up with the demands of a continually growing school. During my last visit, it was very encouraging to see the school's newly-upgraded Computer laboratory, ready to keep up with the trends of ICT.

Definitely, all the hard work has not gone to waste. Southridge students continue to be listed every year among Muntinlupa's Ten Outstanding students since the awards were given in 1994, with Southridge senior student Juan Armando Diaz placing first over-all this year. Math continues to be a source of pride for the school as Paco Adajar, presently in Grade 6, bagged the bronze medal in the World Math Olympiad held in 2003, while Steven Camiña emerged top-scorer in the Australian Mathematics competition. And Math excellence is not only true for bright students: Southridge students reach the finals from Prep to Fourth year in competitions organized by the Math Teacher's Association of the Philippines and Math Trainer's Guild.

Southridge also continues to breed leaders and champions, through the Podium, the Southridge's debate team. Members like Eric John Paredes and Dandan Macalinao were among the champs of the Philippine Debate Championships and the Southern Manila School's Debate Tournament respectively last year. The official school paper, The Ridge continues to be a breeding ground for future journalists as it received the Catholic Mass Media Awards for Best Campus Paper for the second year in a row. It also consistently received recognitions in the Teodoro Valencia Awards these past years.

Graduates also continue to flock to higher institutions of learning after Southridge. Members of the alumni jest about always bumping into co-alumni at the University of the Philippines, the Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University, University of Asia and the Pacific, and the University of Sto. Tomas. A good number of students have also entered universities abroad. 2003 graduate Eric John Paredes, for example, is halfway through his freshman year at Yale University.

Dr. Wenny Olivares, Sr., parent of Chris, a senior High School student, says "Southridge provides her students a strong foundation in academics needed to enter college. The school is strong in Math and English as seen in my son's achievements."

And we've not mentioned strength in sports yet. While the school has only 1159 students and 16 varsity teams, it won 35 sports championships just this school year-in football, basketball, baseball, and chess. This means Southridge obtained the top spot in 85% of the 41 leagues it joined.

Excellence has been with Southridge since the beginning, and since the days of its pioneer batch of 1984. One of Southridge's first top graduates, Paco Sandejas entered UP Diliman, and is the first and only Summa Cum Laude graduate of his course, Applied Physics.

Joey Hidalgo of Batch '91, and now Country Manager of Gillette Philippines is widely-respected in his profession, and shines as an exemplary son of Southridge.

Still, his successful career is not the only thing he thanks Southridge for.

"The holistic education prepares one for what he must do and be in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created," Joey proudly and aptly says.

Southridge continues to shine not only because of its academic excellence, but also because of the PAREF Philosophy, represented by the three stars of the Southridge Seal, symbolizing the real, healthy, and constant interaction of Parents, Teachers and Students. I will always be grateful for the regular "tutorial chats" with my teachers, who were also the crucial bridge between the school and my parents. Quite frankly, I would even say that the chats had made adolescence a smoother journey for me, and many others. These tutors have always been ready to listen and give much-needed friendly advice.

Mr. Bingo Vasquez, father of grade 4 student Butchoy has even better words to say: "The home-school collaboration and Parent Formation Program of Southridge has really helped us a lot to be better parents and have been instrumental in making a better family out of our family."

But Southridge never limited itself to its own affairs as it has always continually striven to be of service to the bigger community, something constantly instilled in students since day one. I feel sad when a number of people fail to see past the very beautiful structures of the school and its well-bred students, and conclude that Southridge students are sheltered or even spoiled. Unfortunately a number of people overlook or even deliberately neglect to see concrete venues of the school for community involvement, as exemplified by regular Outreach Activities, Volunteer Work Camps in depressed communities, the apostolate and charity projects of the Catechism Club and SOUL (Students Organization Upholding Life), and most importantly, the Southridge Afternoon School, which has given opportunity to hundreds of underprivileged but deserving students to receive quality education.

My most meaningful memories of these class activities include going to nearby Sitio Sto. Niño, Muntinlupa as a junior to interact and care for children, and going to to help rehabilitate a barangay health center.

Parents and members of the alumni also pride themselves and are grateful for the sound and consistent Catholic doctrinal formation of the school. Southridge has always been faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church and has even encouraged students to defend it through Apologetics in religion classes, not to mention through subjects like Philosophy and Theology offered in High School. Southridge founding parents surely did not make a mistake of entrusting the doctrinal and spiritual formation of the school to the Opus Dei Prelature, whose founder, St. Josemaria Escriva, was canonized in 2002.

Another parent, Mrs. Mary Jane Perreras is particularly proud of the school's doctrinal formation: "We are absolutely happy and satisfied with Southridge's way of teaching and providing formation for our son, Carlo Pocholo. Pocholo has grown to become a very spiritual and responsible individual. His self-confidence has helped him greatly in all his endeavors."

On March 19, Southridge celebrates its 25th Foundation Day. On March 20, Mass will be celebrated by the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in the Philippines, Msgr. Joseph Duran. A dinner and a concert will follow. How time has really flown and taken Southridge to greatness! But the work of producing Southridge Gentlemen continues. The parents, teachers, staff, students, and alumni - members of the Southridge Community - will still rely on their synergy, which has made the school great, and geared to achieve.

After 25 years, the school is still in Renaissance. Batch '94 alumnus David Zarraga, Operations Manager of Xurpas Inc. says, "Southridge is a bastion of the Renaissance Man, where 'erudition' is a word that actually means something. But more than this, Southridge is a school that teaches her students how to live life well!"

I am especially proud to have been part of Southridge's 25 years of excellence. She has certainly gone a long way from her humble days as a school standing on a slightly elevated hill surrounded by ipil-ipil trees and sugarcane. 2004 and beyond, she has an even brighter future of excellence to journey into.

Like many members of the alumni, I hope to be part of the school's promising future, as a parent by then, actively interacting with the rest of the community to raise my sons into great Southridge Gentlemen. After all, it does take a village to raise a child. It takes good parents, good teachers. It takes a good school. It takes Southridge. *Ralph Guzman*

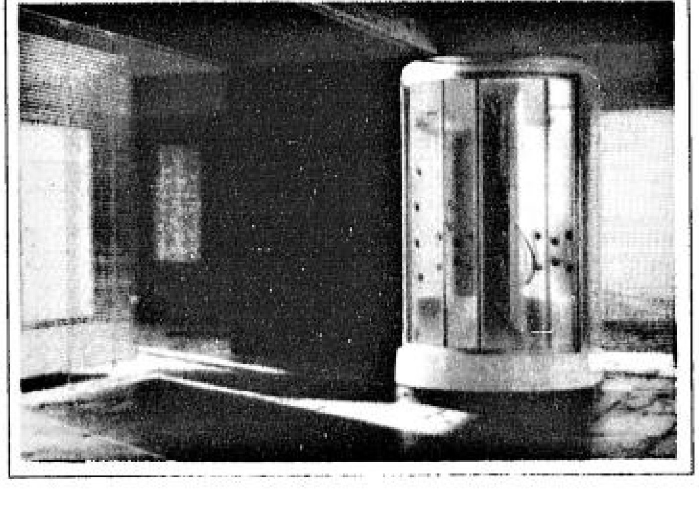
Product FILES

A seafood catch at Mocha Blends

KNOWN for its array of coffee, beverage and food preparations, Mocha Blends, in observance of the Lenten Season recommends its seafood special called Creamy Crab on Toast. Rich in texture and style, this sandwich is filled with crab slices, cream cheese, yoghurt and a selection of spices that makes this humble filling special. Creamy Crab on Toast is served with chips. Other Lenten menu specials are Daing na Bangus, Tuna Melt and Tuna con Tomato Pasta. All meals are served with a choice of Mocha Blends' Black Cafe Italiano or House Blend Iced Tea - a sure must with every meal. Enjoy these Lenten specials at Mocha Blends. Now with 24 branches over Metro Manila, North Luzon and South Luzon. For inquiries, call 410-0774, Mocha Blends head office.

Pharo wellness products at Worldbex

LEADING innovator bathroom designer Hansgrohe through its Pharo brand name continues to address the ever-increasing demand for "health beneficial" products. Pharo's Shower Panel, Shower Temple, Whirlpools and Steam Showers offer therapeutic use to pure bathing and shower pleasure to an oasis of peace. The Pharo Shower Temple is on display at Worldbex until March 20, at the World Trade Center. For more information, please call Kuysen Bath Gallery at 729-3595. Shown is the Pharo Shower Temple. A relaxing steam bath in the Pharo Shower Temple not only creates a sense of physical well-being, but also strengthens the immune system. Once one closes the doors of the Pharo Shower Temple, he will enjoy the healing powers of water, steam, aromatic oils and colored lighting on mind and body.



Bits & Clips

Realtors' Lenten rites

THE NATIONAL Real Estate Association (NREA), led by its trustees, executive officers and members, will hold a two-day spiritual retreat on March 20 to 21 at the NREA-Jesclare Chapel in Hacienda Dolores, Porac, Pampanga. Participants will troop early morning on March 20 to this "unknown shrine" in Porac, Pampanga, and start the day with a Thanksgiving Mass at 10:30 a.m., followed by a "Pasyon", and an all-night vigil and meditation. On the following day, NREA participants will distribute food packages to children of Aeta families living near the vicinity. For details call 913-4463 or 9123492.

Natural health confab

HEALING of the mind, body and spirit is the theme of the 3rd Philippine Congress and Exhibition on Natural Health on March 20 and 21, at the Holiday Inn, Galleria, Manila (formerly Galleria Suites). During the two-day conference, a health exhibition will be held at the Grand Ballroom where herbal products and medical health services will be displayed. Health technologies on display includes live blood analysis, Iriscope, Quantum machine. Free health and medical consultations will be offered for free to the public from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The event is organized by the International Associations of Educators for World Peace-Phils (IAEWP-Phils), a UN-NGO and Coordinating Council on Early Childhood Education for the Phils (Concep). Registration fee is P2,500. For more information, call 371-7015 to 16.

LBES '64 grand reunion

ON THE occassion of its 40th anniversary, the Los Baños Elem. School class of 1964 (all sections) is holding its grand reunion today, at the residence of Benigna Umali in Los Baños, Laguna, right beside the school compound. The event will start at 8 a.m. Members of class '64 are enjoined to wear white shirt and maong pants. For information, contact Linda Matundan at 0916-4102827; Irma Bernardo-Bernas, 0919-5863437; or Eva Sacramento, 0920-890-7249.

Galilee Marriage Encounter

TURN a good marriage into a great marriage through a Marriage Encounter Weekend this April. The Galilee Catholic Charismatic Community will sponsor a Marriage Encounter Weekend at the St. Bridget's Retreat House, Tagaytay City starting Friday evening, April 23, and ending on Sunday afternoon, April 25. The Marriage Encounter is designed to renew marriages by offering the chance for spouses to rediscover each other. The program has also been proven helpful in healing marriages on the rocks. To reserve, please call or text Cris at 0917-8403052, Cora at 0917-5003961, or Jingle at 0917-8427896

ODPN INDUCTS OFFICERS AND SETS PROGRAMS

The Organizational Development Professionals Network (ODPN) is a non-stock, non-profit association organized in 2001 by 15 charter members from different organizations who desire to highlight the importance of the OD function and the continuous improvement of its practice in the country. ODPN has set 3 development programs for 2004: Breakfast Learning Sessions called 'Kapihan sa ODPN', the Basic OD Series and the Executive Series. The 1st 'Kapihan' is on the GE Workout on Tuesday, March 23, from 7:30 to 10 a.m. at San Miguel Properties Centre, Ortigas. It is a simple but revolutionary method developed by General Electric to move teams quickly from analysis to decision then to action. Tita D. Puangco, acknowledged OD practitioner and CEO of Ancilla Enterprise Development Consulting, will be the presentor. The learning session is open to the public but seating is limited. Registration fee is P750 pesos for non-members and P500 for members. For other details and early registration please call Au Reyes at 892-2895 or 96; or email aureyes@ancillaedc.com.ph. Shown is the induction of its 2004 officers (from left): Lot Ortiz-Luis (president), Cora Corpus (vice president), Lulu Corpus (secretary), Petite Paradero (treasurer), Maribel Umali (auditor), Beth Nasol (membership committee head), Tina Bonifacio (development committee head), and Mar Huidem (outgoing president).

Ayala Westgrove exhibit

AYALA Westgrove Heights, one of Ayala Land Inc's residential projects in the south, will be exhibiting various design works by a number of renowned architects and landscape designers in a 2-day event for residents of the high-end subdivision and guests alike. This will be held on March 20 and 21 at the Kidsgrove Clubhouse from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. A diverse set of works will be on display, spotlighting the creative minds behind some of the most attractive homes in many Ayala Land projects. For more details about the exhibit and Ayala Westgrove Heights, cal 848-5000, log on to www.ayalaland.com.ph or email ayala-sales@ayalaland.com.

New TV treats for kids

SOON to perk up every kid's viewing appetite are the jelly-cious Jellabies and the bratty-and-all Little Monsters, two all-new animated series that are scheduled for airing at RPN 9. Watch them every Saturday at 9 a.m. at RPN 9. Their premier telecast will be today. Jellabies and Little Monsters are brought to you by Empire Entertainment and RPN 9. For licensing opportunities and other inquiries, call 722-4311/722-4325 or email at empirent@mozcom.com.

Salute to the Graduate

EL COMEDOR has an exciting treat for the graduates - on the house lunch or dinner, provided you are a group of at least 3 persons Feast on their flavorful dishes. For further details, call 893-2518/892-5071. This coming Lenten season, El Comedor offers you the 'Take out Food List for your Easter Summer Trip'. Send or fax your order for company outings, family get together, and picnics. They will pack your orders in convenient take away containers. Call El Comedor and they will fax you their food list.

FCC moves to new office

FULL Circle Communications (FCC) is transferring to its new office on Makati City starting March 22. Its address, telephone and fax numbers are as follows: Rm. 301, 3rd floor RCI Bldg. 105 Rada St., Legaspi Village, Makati City. Trunk line: 812-5485, 812-5489, 812-5492. Fax No. 812-4097. Email: info@fullcircle.com.ph.

LSGH Valedictorian

AARON Dante Mamilt will graduate high school as Valedictorian for SY 2003-2004 on March 21. Born from proud parents, the late architect Dante Mamilt and Ma. Eve Cabañes Murillo. Aaron will be taking up BS Manufacturing and Engineering Management with specialization in Mechatronics and Robotics at De La Salle University-Manila

SATURDAY, MARCH 20, 2004

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  Kingswoon Tower Pablo Ocampo St., Mkti City
- Unit 2010 (FA; 36.49 sqm.)
  Lower Penthouse Medical Plaza Condominium
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- Blk. 3, Lt. 12 (Area: 330 sqm.)
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- Blk. 41, Lt. 3 (Area: 328 sqm.)
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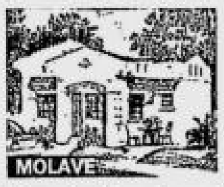
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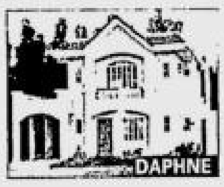
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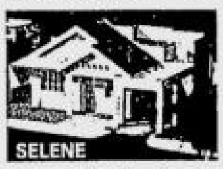
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DOG TRAINER 0919-3419012

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5633742 0917-8473744

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE is given that estate of the late Spouses **EDUARDO ALO SY AKA YUCHIN** and **MERCEDES CIMAFRANCA** was extrajudicially settled by their heirs on August 3, 2001 per Doc No. 467 Page No. 95 Book I Series 2001 before Atty. Renelda F. Chanco of Cebu City.
(PDI - March 6, 13 & 20, 2004)

Notice is given of estate of the late ALVIN A. PAPA was extrajudicially settled w/sale by the heirs as per Doc456 Page92 BookXIII Series 2004 before Notary Public Atty. Jose L. Magsanoc of Marikina City.
PDI-March 6,13&20, 2004

Notice is hereby given that the estate of PELAGIA S. VIRAY was extrajudicially settled among heirs before Notary Public Danilo Leyble Rizal Chap. per Doc#441 Page#89 Book#133 Series of 2004 (PDI-March 13, 20 & 27, 2004)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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JEWELRY NO CAPITAL CONSIGN TRMS MST B EMPLOYD 984-2865

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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50 PROMO GIRLS FACTORY WORKERS 4155119 /4155409

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MALE/FEMALE

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT ALAY LAKAD FOUNDATION, INC GRADUATE OF ANY SOCIAL SCIENCE OR BUSINESS COURSE, EXPERIENCE IN PROJECT ADMINISTRATION AND/OR ANY OFFICE WORK PREFERRED NOT OVER 35 YEARS OLD, MALE/FEMALE GOOD STARTING SALARY, APPLICANTS PERSONALLY SUBMIT BIODATA WITH PHOTO AT #1680 BENITEZ COR MALVAR STS MALATE MANILA OR CALL 5226134 / 5231539

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Mktng Ofc Asst 0920-8062187

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A TRANSLATOR
(Arabic to English / English to Arabic)

Qualifications:
- Male
- College graduate
- Proficient in oral and written (English/Arabic) language
- Work experience of not less than 5 years

Submit your resumé at 1644 Dasmariñas Avenue corner Mabolo St., Dasmariñas Village, Makati City from Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

PHILIPPINE HEART CENTER
East Avenue, Quezon City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY & TO BID

The Philippine Heart Center (PHC) is inviting bidders for:

DESCRIPTION	Approved Budget	Bidding Fee
Laundry Services	P 3.92 million	P 5,420.00
Dishwashing Machine	1.5 million	3,000.00

Source of Funding: PHC FUNDS

The list of eligibility requirements will be issued at the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) Secretariat, Purchasing Division, Basement of MAB, PHC, East Avenue, Quezon City. Only eligible bidders shall be required is on **April 16, 2004** not later than 4:00 p.m. For any inquiry, please call Purchasing Division at tel. no. 922-0574 ask for Ms. Noemi Nocasa.

The PHC reserves the right to reject any and all bids or declare a failure of bidding or not award the contract, if there is evidence of collusion between relevant public officers or employees of the PHC and any of the bidders, or among the bidders, or between bidders and third parties, including any act which restricts, suppresses or nullifies competition, or if the BAC is found to have failed to follow the prescribed bidding procedures. The agency also reserves the right to waive any formality on the bids received, provided that such waiver does not refer to a major deviation in a bid or any requirement provided for in the **Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act No. 9184** pertaining to the substance of the bid. Should such review uncover any misrepresentation made in the eligibility statement, or any changes in the situation of the bidder materially downgrade the substance of such statements, the PHC shall disqualify the bidder upon due notice without any obligation whatsoever for any expenses or losses that may be incurred by it in the preparation of its bids.

(Sgd.) **RAUL D. JARA, M.D.**
Chairman, BAC

(PDI - March 20, 21, 27 & 28, 2004)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

The Laguna Lake Development Authority has terminated the services of **LUISITO B. BALBAGO**, whose photograph appears below, effective February 19, 2004.

Any transaction/representation hereinafter made by the above named person in the name of the Authority is not authorized.

(PDI–March 20, 2004)

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE/FEMALE

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GUIDANCE COUNSELORS
SCHOOL NURSE

Applicants must be Catholic, not more than 35 years old, with above average scholastic records and must have passed the PROFESSIONAL BOARD FOR TEACHERS. ATTRACTIVE SALARY AND BENEFITS AWAIT SUCCESFUL APPLICANTS.

Apply personally and bring your transcript of records on March 22-26 from 8:00-4:00 p.m.

(ALL CLASSROOMS ARE FULLY AIR-CONDITIONED)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Agrarian Reform
Agrarian Reform Community Development Support Project
Italian Soft Loan Facility

INVITATION TO BID

The Government of the Philippines, through the Department of Agrarian Reform will implement the Agrarian Reform Community Development Support Project (ARCDSP), with funding assistance from the Government of Italy. The DAR intends to apply the Italian soft loan to cover the cost of a contract for the establishment of three (3) Farmer Support Centers (FSCs) in Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, and Sarangani. The total amount for the three sites is Euro 21,352,762.00 to be divided in the following way:

-civil works	Euro 5,158,104.00
-supplies	Euro 10,545,805.00
-services	Euro 5,648,853.00

The project involves the following:

1) Component FSC Physical Infrastructures --pertaining to civil works, goods and services to build and equip the three Farmer Support Centers, including technical assistance.
2) Component Start-up Period Management and Training (3 years) – pertaining to technical assistance, training, and actual transfer of assets to the beneficiaries.
3) Components First Independent FSC Management Period (5 years) – pertaining to technical assistance and training after the completion of donor funded project.

The procurement of goods and services will be done through a contract that will be awarded to a consortium or association of Italian -Filipino companies according to the following criteria:

1.1 The provision of supplies and services, pertaining to the component "FSC Physical Infrastructures" that shall be of Italian origin, is restricted to Italian companies.
1.2 The provision of those goods and services, pertaining to the component "FSC Physical Infrastructures" which are more economically purchased in the Philippines or in other developing countries, especially in the South East Asia Region, is open to Italian and Filipino companies.
1.3 The provision of management and training services related to the Component "Start-up period Management and Training (3 years), as well as the provision of Management and Training services related to the Component "First Independent FSC Management period (5 years)" is open to Italian and Filipino companies.
1.4 The supplies and services provided for the items 1.2 and 1.3 amounting to 37% of the total Italian soft loan, may be purchased from the Republic of the Philippines or in other developing countries.

The Department of Agrarian Reform now invites eligible consortium or association of Italian Filipino companies to indicate their interest in providing the goods and services.

Interested consortium or association of companies must provide information indicating that they are qualified to provide the goods and services, such as legal basis or documents of the consortium, profile of the consortium and member companies (brochures, experience in similar projects, track record, experience in the areas to be covered by the ARCDSP, financial standing for the last 2 years, samples of relevant outputs, availability and profile of staff). The bids to be submitted by interested consortium should include three components: (1) civil works, (2) supplies, (3) services.

The consortium will be selected through competitive bidding, in accordance with the standards of the Manual of Instructions adopted by the European Commission on 10th November 1999.

Interested consortium may obtain further information from the Executive Director of Foreign Assisted Projects Office at the address below during office hours.

Expression of interest must be delivered to the address below by not later than March 31, 2004.

The Executive Director
Foreign Assisted Projects Office
Ground Floor, FAPSO Building, DAR Compound,
Elliptical Road, Diliman
Quezon City, Philippines.
Telefax: (632) 927-07-52; Tel 426-74-55
E-mail: minniesj@dar.gov.ph

Short listed candidates shall submit their bids for works, goods and services not later than 9:00 am, May 17,2004.

(PDI–March 20 & 25, 2004)

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PANGASIWAAN NG TUBIG AT ALKANTARILYA SA METRO MANILA
Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System
Katipunan Road, Balara, Quezon City 1105, Philippines

15 March 2004

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (CONSULTANT SERVICES)

PHILIPPINES
Strengthening of Planning of Water Supply, Sewerage and Sanitation Services in Metro Manila under MWSS
(Water Supply, Sewerage and Sanitation Sector)
CONSULTING SERVICES

Expressions of Interest

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) has received a Technical Assistance financing from the World Bank, through the Japan Policy and Human Resources Development, toward the cost of the Strengthening of Planning of Water Supply, Sewerage and Sanitation Services in Metro Manila under MWSS, and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consultant services. The services shall include, but not limited to, the following:

(a) Updating of the MWSS' water supply, sewerage and sanitation master plan, including developing specific plans to address government efforts in cleaning-up of Pasig River and Manila Bay as well as the possible passage of Clean Water Act.
(b) Analysis of technical options and identifying least cost options to address environmental degradation in Metro Manila.
(c) Determining the appropriate policy on sewer charges, including the extent of subsidy, as necessary.
(d) Conduct a study on willingness to pay of communities for sewerage and sanitation services.

The MWSS now invites eligible consultants to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested consultants must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochures, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, availability of appropriate skills among staff, etc.). The Consultant should have prepared at least one Sewerage/Sanitation Master Plan of a city or metro area with a population of at least 5,000,000 within the last ten years. Consultants may associate to enhance their qualifications.

A consultant will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World *Bank's Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers* (current edition).

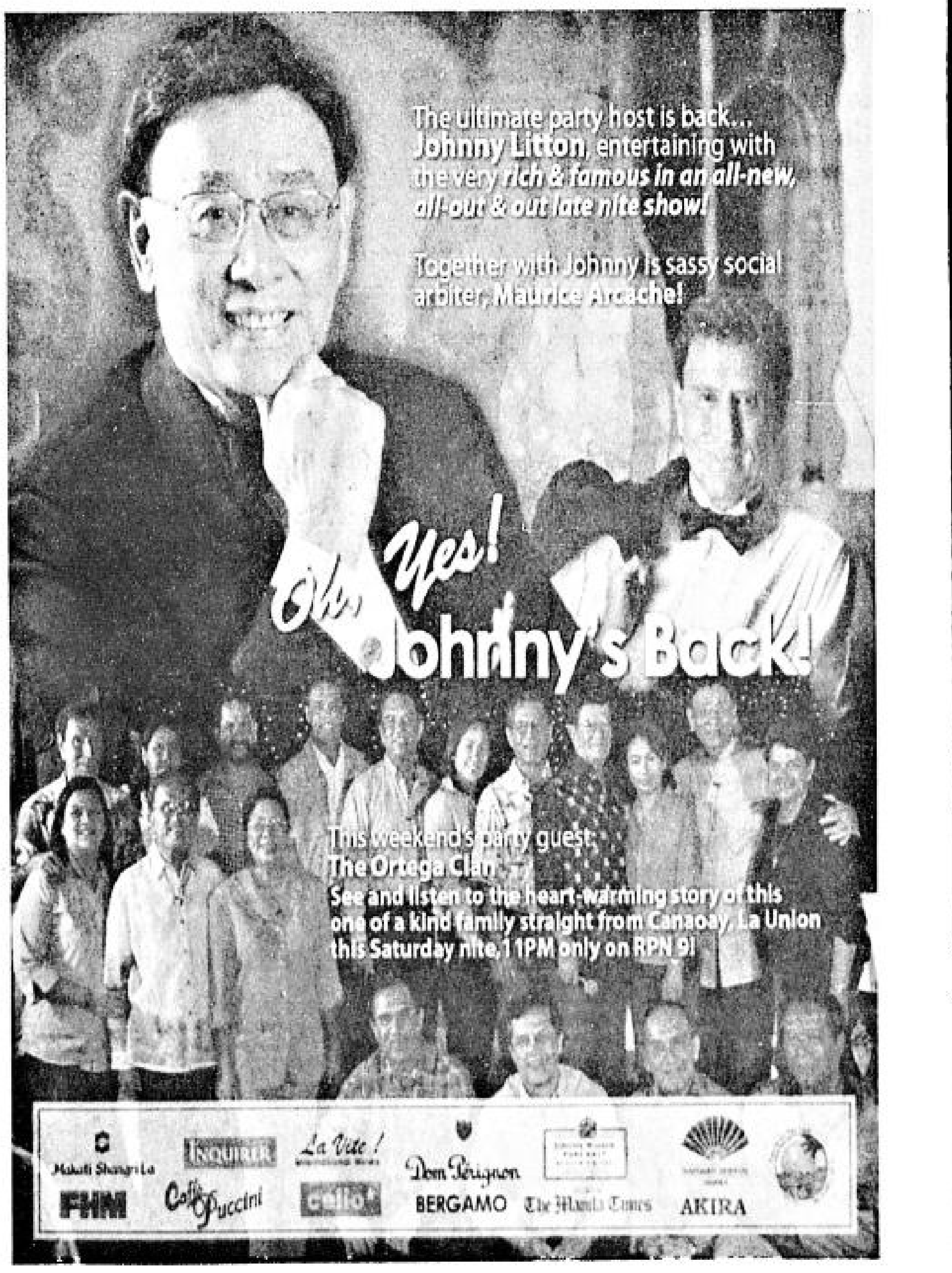
Interested consultants may obtain the Pre-qualification statement/forms at the address below during office hours, from 0800 to 1700 hours.

Expressions of interest, together with filled-in prequalification statement/forms, must be delivered to the address below by **29 March 2004; 1700 hours.**

MWSS Bidding and Awards Committee (BAC)
Attention: Ms. Macra A. Cruz, Chairman
Engineering and Project Management Department
Ground Floor, Engineering Building
Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System
Katipunan Road, Balara, Quezon City, Philippines
Telefax Nos. (632) 922-2568, (632) 920-5413
E-mail: bcleofas@philonline.com

(Sgd.) **ORLANDO C. HONDRADE**
Administrator

(PDI - March 18 & 20, 2004)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Johnny Litton, entertaining with the very rich & famous in an all-new, all-out & out late nite show!
Together with Johnny is sassy social arbiter, Maurice Arcache!
Oh, Yes! Johnny's Back!
This weekend's party guest:
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Inquirer
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FHM
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Message of Thanks

The U.P. College of Nursing Family,
Paring Abulencia, Loretta Galang,
Essem Perez and Marita Carag

and the relatives of the late

JULITA VILLARUEL SOTEJO

who joined her Creator on March 5, 2004

wish to convey their heartfelt gratitude to all those who paid their last respect and grieved with them, offered masses and prayers, sent flowers, messages of sympathy, kept vigil, were present at the necrological services, novena masses, funeral rites and who in various generous ways gave comfort at the time of their great loss and sorrow.

ATTY. DIOSDADO Z. RELOJ, JR.

February 22, 1944 - March 18, 2004
of Banga, Aklan

Was called home to the Lord on Thursday, March 18, 2004.

He is survived by his beloved wife **Edna "Boots" Fuentebella**; children **Dino, Pia, Lico** and **Rayan**; brothers and sisters **Reza & Tito, Gab & Inday Arline, Derly & Louie, Inday Noemi, Nono & Arlette,** and his nephews and nieces.

He bade goodbye to his 1967 classmates in Ateneo College of Law, brods in the Fraternal Order of Utopia, and colleagues in the Maritime Law Association of the Philippines (WARLAW), Philippine Bar Association, and IBP Aldan Chapter.

He also bade adieu to his dearest friends in the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Movement.

Among his welcomers at Heaven's Gate are his father, Judge Diosdado Yabut Reloj, mother Paciencia Rabanes Zabal, uncle Bernardo Y. Reloj and brother Noel I.

His body will be cremated and ashes strewn at a place of his choice.

OBITUARY

GAN GA HON Y. (CONCEPCION LIMBONHAI)
OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY

Passed away and joined her Creator on Wednesday, 17th of March, 2004, at the age of 74.

Her beloved husband, TIRSO S. LIMBONHAI; children VIRGINIA, MARY, LILY. BETTY, WILLY and JERRY; sons-in-law ANTONIO, WILSON. VICENTE and HENRY; daughters-in-law KATHRYN and CAROLINE; brother EDWARD and wife ANN, sister NGA YEE, all her grandchildren, request prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Greenhills Memorial Chapel, Bulua,Cagayan De Oro City.

Interment will take place on Thursday, March 25 2004 at Cagayan De Oro Gardens, Cagayan De Oro City, following the 9:00a.m. Holy Mass at the Cagayan De Oro Saint Augustine Cathedral.

ENGR. MARIO REYES TANTAY

May 27, 1945 - March 15, 2004

His loving wife, **DR. ESTELITA MULDONG TANTAY** (Retired Physician of the US Navy w/ the Rank of Captain); parents, **Policarpio Tantay (†) & Petronilla Reyes Tantay (†)**; brothers/sisters, **Placido Tantay (†), Rafael Tantay, Sr. (†), Florentina Duzon (†), Josefa Mendoza, Enriqueta Bustamante.**

Schedule of Mass, Viewing and Interment:

March 18	3-8 PM (viewing) 5 PM (rosary)	Our Lady Star of the Sea, Bremerton, Washington
March 19	2:30 PM (Funeral Mass) Celebrant : Fr. Patrick Freitag	Our Lady Star of the Sea Bremerton, Washington
March 21	4-8 PM (viewing at chapel) 5 PM (Rosary)	Eternal Hills, Oceanside, San Diego, CA
March 22 (Interment)	1 PM (Funeral Mass) 2 PM (Burial)	Old Mission San Luis Rey, San Diego, CA Eternal Hills, Oceanside, San Diego, CA

For inquiries, please contact ***Mr. Bobby Muldong of 8489 Westmore Road, #47 San Diego, CA at tel. # 858-695-3346.***

ON HER SECOND DEATH ANNIVERSARY

We Lovingly Remember

LUZ R. MUTUG

of Arayat, Pampanga

who passed away on March 23, 2002.

Holy Masses will be offered on Tuesday, March 23, 2004:

Asilo dela Milagrosa .... 6:00 AM
Lahug, Cebu City
Sto. Niño Basilica .... 6:30 AM
Cebu City
Santo Rosario Parish .... 6:00 AM
Cebu City
Peace Adoration Convent .... 6:00 AM
Banilad, Cebu City
St. Peter Parish .... 7:00 AM
Commonwealth Ave., Q.C.

We design OBITUARIES for free.

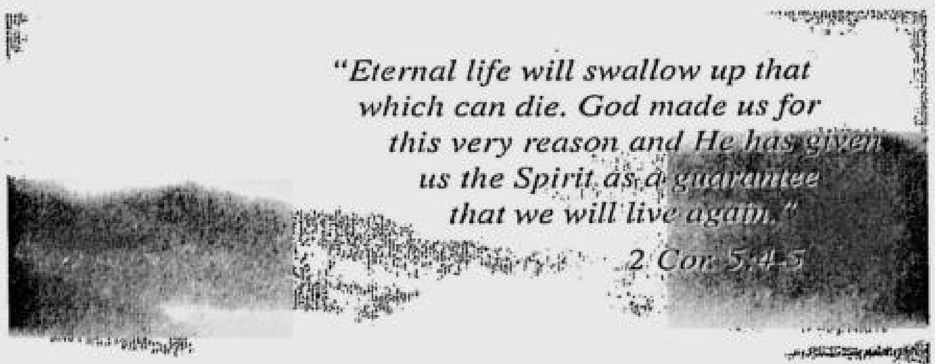
PURIFICACION "Purita" HILARIO SILVERIO

Died in the Grace of the Lord on March 14, 2004 at the age of 83.

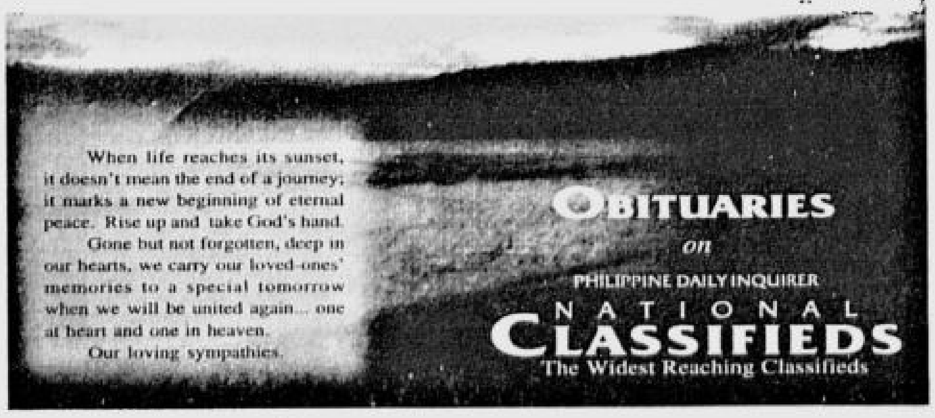
Her loving children **Nanding & Betty, Ben & Beth, Joey & Yang, Kito, Charit,** and **Donnie & Me-Ann**; grandchildren **Zarene, Paulo, Ann, Kristine & Oman, Carol & Chris, BJ, Lian, JJ, Jenny, Rose, Marian, Mark** and **Danica**; great grandchildren **Kervin, Kyle, PA** and **Sam**; sisters **Zarina** and **Dolores**; brother **Rosauro**; relatives and friends request the pious readers for your continuing prayers.

Her remains lie in state at the Dulce Memorial Chapel, 2926 J.A. Santos Ave. cor. Dinalupihan St., Manuguit, Manila.

Interment will be on March 21, 2004, Sunday, at Eternal Gardens Memorial Park, Caloocan City after the 1:30 p.m. Mass.



"Eternal life will swallow up that which can die. God made us for this very reason and He has given us the Spirit as a guarantee that we will live again."
2 Cor. 5:4-5



When life reaches its sunset, it doesn't mean the end of a journey; it marks a new beginning of eternal peace. Rise up and take God's hand.
Gone but not forgotten, deep in our hearts, we carry our loved-ones' memories to a special tomorrow when we will be united again... one at heart and one in heaven.
Our loving sympathies.

OBITUARIES on PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER NATIONAL CLASSIFIEDS
The Widest Reaching Classifieds

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243 A.B. Fernandez Ave., Dagupan City, Pangasinan
Tels. (0785) 522-3451; 522-2128; (0917) 434-9976
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1305 G. Araneta Ave., Quezon City
Tel. 732-0309; 732-1095
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Cebu Branch: A.S. Fortuna Street, Banilad, Mandaue City, Cebu;
Tels. 346-2543; 346-2601
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Tels. 231-0721; 231-3192
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Tels. (082) 227-1201; 227-1258
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Tels. 740-2683; 781-3705; 781-3688; 413-9400: 715-5594
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Tels. 416-3231; 4102373
ERIC SANTIAGO MEMORIAL CHAPELS
26 Bayanbayan Ave., Concepcion I, Marikina City; Tels. 942-6044; 475-1177
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Tels 2812963; 2813034; 2810522
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187 Real St., Zapote Alabang, Las Piñas;
Tels 873-0507; 873-0024
FUNERARIA FILIPINAS
865 J.P. Rizal St., Poblacion, Makati City;
Tels. 890-3556; 890-8191
FUNERARIA TUASON
Poblacion, San Miguel, Bulacan 3011;
Tels. (044) 764-0281; 678-0266; (0917) 895-0603
FUNERARIA SAMSON
145 Bayan Luma, Imus, Cavite;
Tels. (046) 471-3375; 471-2675
GARDEN OF MEMORIES MEMORIAL PARK
Calsadang Bago, Pateros, Metro Manila;
Tels. 642-6181 to 82
HERITAGE PARK
Bayani Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Tels. (DL) 845-2341 to 42; (TL) 845-2334 to 38 loc. 110/112
HOLY GARDENS MEMORIAL PARK
Third Level, Unishoppe Complex Quezon Ave., Angono, Rizal
Tels. 651-1711; 651-0737
HOLY TRINITY MEMORIAL CHAPELS
Dr. A. Santos Ave., Sucat Rd., Sucat, Parañaque City; Tels. 825-1296; 825-1291, Telefax: 825-1314
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#27 Crisologo St., Vigan, Ilocos Sur;
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79 Naguilian Rd., Baguio City;
Tel. (074) 443-3337; (074) 442-3117
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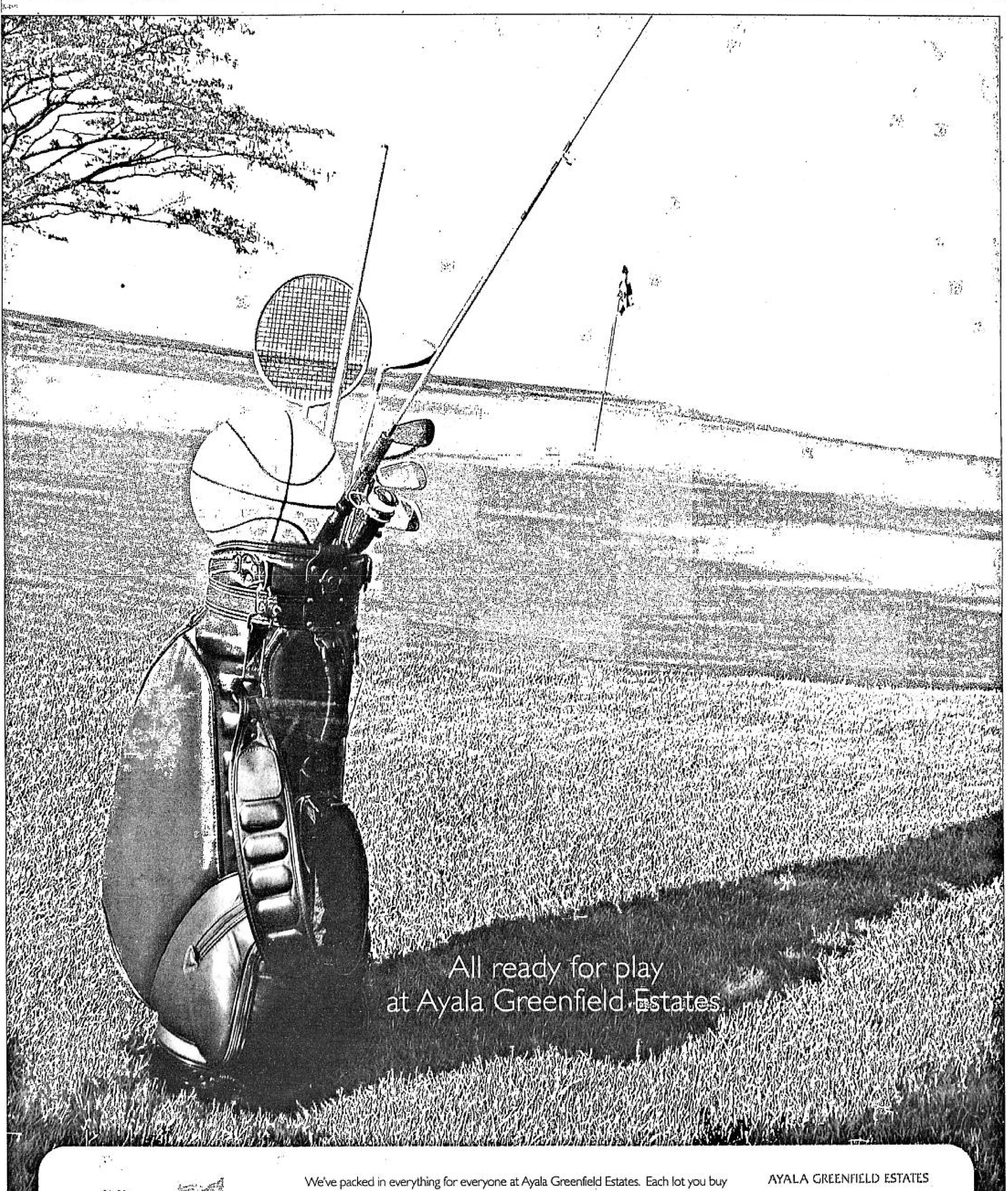
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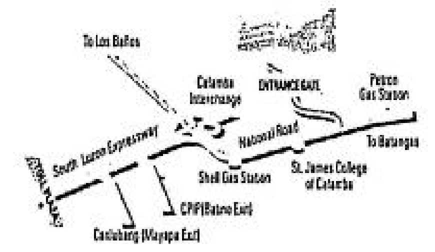
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SATURDAY Special

Editor **Nestor U. Torre** ▣ Assistant Editor **Rito P. Asilo**

GO. Secure performance and natural projection.

Singing tilt finals turn into sobfest

By Nestor U. Torre

LAST March 13, "Search for A Star" held its second grand finals, with 10 monthly winners doing their musical darndest to win the singing tilt's top plum.

Right off the bat, we noticed that this year's batch was not as strong as Sarah Geronimo's group. There were a number of callow, awkward finalists who tried to get by on sheer lung power, and the effect was disconcerting.

Crack at stardom

But what really turned us off was most of the finalists' penchant for sobbing over everything—their crack at stardom, their relatives' presence, their sad and impoverished lives, etc.

Did they do this to touch the hearts of the judges and viewers? Well, since most of the finalists resorted to the lachrymal waterworks, the ploy became predictable and irritating after a while. After all, the talent search was for the best singer, not the most copious and anguished weeper in the soggy bunch!

We did feel for the finalists and their sad lives, but the talent search's finals weren't the right venue for their pathetic and bathetic display. We trust that next season's finalists stop crying themselves a river, and concentrate instead on coming up with more polished, less loud and more musically astute performances.

In the light of those reactions, we rather liked the fact that Rachelle Ann Go was chosen as winner of the second grand finals of "Search for A Star," because she was among the less loud and tearful finalists.

Emotional blackmail

She pretty much kept her composure and won judges and viewers over, not with the prevalent "emotional blackmail," but with her relatively secure performance and natural projection.

We hope that Rachelle will become as successful as the tilt's first grand champion, Sarah Geronimo, who is now a certified teen star, with exposure in recording, the movies, on TV and on the concert scene.

Being older (at 17) than Sarah, Rachelle should also come across as less callow than Ms Geronimo, whose success sometimes looks too rushed and forced. Talent should really be given time to come into its own, rather than being showcased too soon in one project after another, to make hay while the artificially glaring show biz sun shines.

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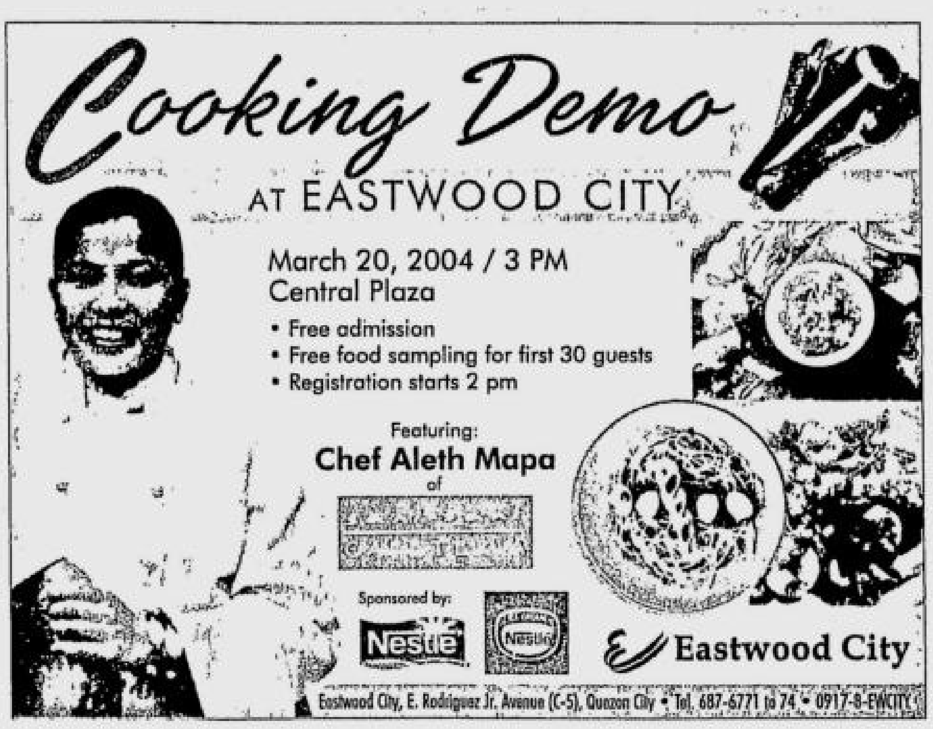

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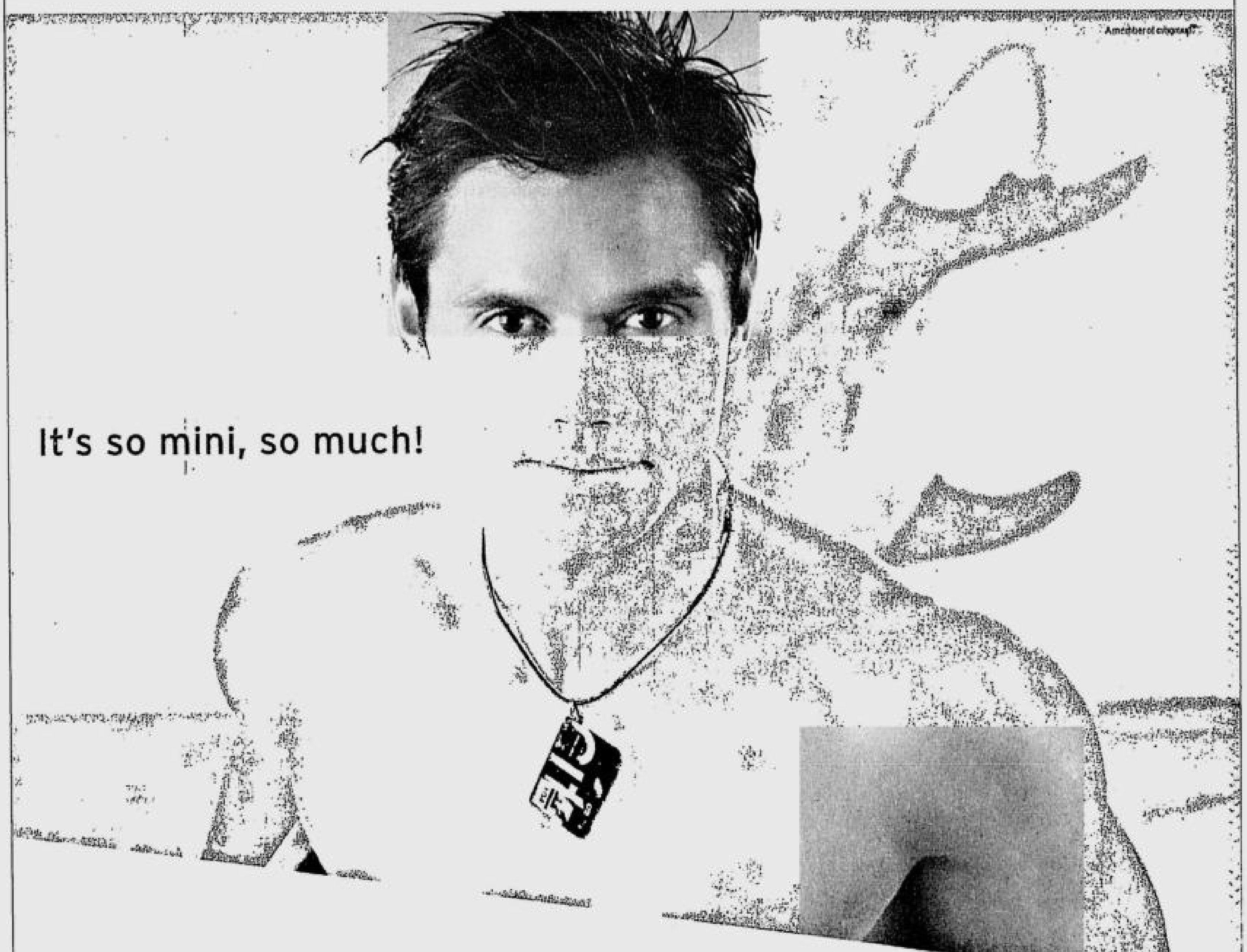

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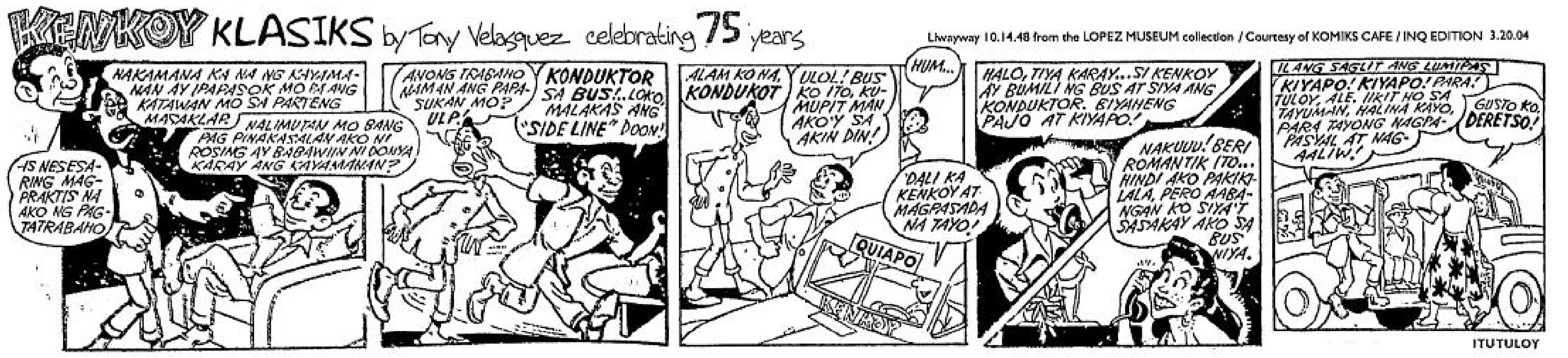
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ITUTULOY

The Gospel according to Mel Gibson

By Rito P. Asilo

"THE PASSION of the Christ" is unlike any movie we've seen about Jesus. That is not saying that director Mel Gibson has taken too many artistic liberties the way Martin Scorsese dabbled into what-could-have-been territory to probe Christ's human persona in the otherwise brilliant "The Last Temptation of Christ."

Gibson's film is an unsentimental, staggeringly graphic and unblinking depiction of Jesus' suffering to vivify God's love for humanity.

In fact, if there's anything you *can't* say about the film, it's that it hasn't been faithful to its source, the Gospels. This is engaging filmmaking at its disturbing, provocative best.

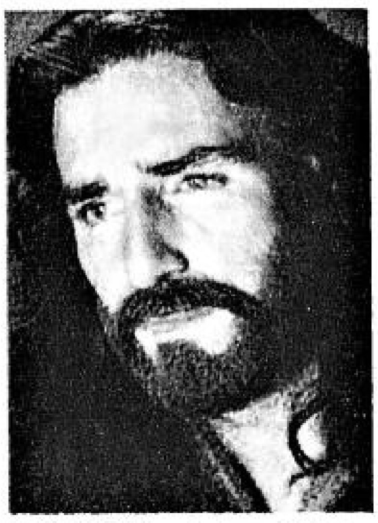
However, the film's cinematic tone takes the opposite route from the versions of Franco Zeffirelli, Cecil B.DeMille and Nicholas Ray. This is not the feel-good, pious visualization that popular filmmaking has often served up.

Message of mercy

The fact that the movie takes on the Old Testament's fire-and-brimstone anger more than the New Testament's message of mercy brings a gnawing feeling of defeat (and, perhaps, guilt) as you watch Jim Caviezel flayed down to the bone, literally, in a grueling nine-minute scourging.

Gibson's movie is a detailed tour of what Christ went through on his march to Golgotha—every bloody step of the way.

What Gibson successfully brings to the fore is the fact that there is no shortcut to faith. The way to the cross is not cushioned by its eventual message of salvation—it's gory, cruel and sadistic.



CAVIEZEL. The pain doesn't let up until it delivers its message.

The pain doesn't let up until it delivers its message. Which is exactly what leaves the Christian world gasping for breath as this filmic evangelization clearly demonstrates that Jesus' suffering is not merely an opaque concept of self-sacrifice.

In Gibson's execution, the familiar story takes on a more visceral, personal meaning. You don't go to the theater expecting to be entertained; you leave it disturbed and shaken.

Last 12 hours

The movie, two hours and six minutes long, in Aramaic and Latin with English subtitles, covers the last 12 hours of Jesus' earthly existence. It starts out on the Garden of Gethsemane as Jesus struggles over his fear for his life while Satan, who morphs throughout the movie in Gollum-like sinister presence, taunts him: "Do you truly believe that one man can bear the full burden of sin?" To which, Jesus replies in prayer: "Father, shelter me. In you I take refuge. Let your will be done."

Gibson intercuts the scenes with flashbacks that are rich in imagery and emotional weight.

Secular eye

To the secular eye, the movie may look like a one-note funeral dirge. While you can understand why the rabbinical senate of the Sanhedrin had stood by its decision to send Jesus to the cross for what they perceived as blasphemous and revolutionary, Gibson should have probed deeper into their motives the way he effectively examined Pilate's and Judas' struggles with their conscience.

This would have made the Jewish leaders, like the flamboyant Herod, more than the one-dimesional caricatures that they are in the movie.

For all its wrath and anger, "The Passion" is more an indictment of man's negligence than a tool to cast aspersions against a particular race. After all, in the movie, *everybody* sent Jesus to his death; nobody even dared to stop it!

Is the movie violent? Yes, but it is not gratuitous. Those familiar with Quentin Tarantino's "Kill Bill," Gaspar Noe's "Irreversible" or Kim Ki Duk's "The Isle" will probably find the violence more contextually justified here than in those films.

The Gospel according to Mel Gibson is a fresh albeit disturbing perspective on Jesus Christ's Passion to knock some sense into Christianity.

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Have a creative summer at the CCP

By Nestor U. Torre

SUMMER courses in the arts are being offered by many groups, but the workshops at the Cultural Center of the Philippines are among the most comprehensive of the lot.

We recently met with the CCP's Associate Artistic Director, Chris Millado, and he described the courses open to people interested in dance, theater, music, and visual arts:

Summer Dance Workshop (Ballet Philippines, tel. no. 832-3676).

Creative Dramatics for Children (from five to eight years old), taught by Paolo O'Hara and Mayen Estañero. And another course for nine to 11-year-olds, with instructors Mailes Kanapi and Marjorie Lorico.

Acting in Musical Theater (17 years and older). Instructors, Mia Bolaños and Roy Rolloda.

Teen Theater (12 to 16 years old), taught by Chyna Roxas.

Beginning Acting (17 years old and above). Instructor, Tess Jamias.

Events, Production and Stage Management, taught by Ed Murillo.

New musical

Creating a New Musical: Book Lyrics and Song. Instructor: Rody Vera.

Set Design and Techniques. Instructor Bobot Lota.

Costume Design and Techniques, taught by Gino Gonzales.

Lighting Design and Techniques, taught by Joey Nombres.

Batang-Sining, a five-day creative-expression workshop for children six to 13 years old (April 13 to 17).

Theater Workshop (April 13 to 18), taught by Ed Reggi.

Drawing and Painting Workshop (six years old and above). Instructor, Rommel Wire Tuazon.

PPO Music School, taught by selected members of the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra.

National Folk Dance Workshop for Teachers presented in cooperation with the Philippine Folk Dance Society, DECS, CHED and Tesda.

Playwright Development Initiative, with feedback from actors, directors and audience. Presented in cooperation with the Write Circle. Instructor: NUT.

Lecture series

There will also be a lecture series. Schedule: April 17, Acting in Musical Theater, 9 a.m. April 17 at 12 noon, Directing Musical Theater (Bobby Garcia). April 24, Producing and Marketing Musical Theater, 9 a.m. (Audie Gemora). April 24 at 1 p.m., Designing a Musical (Salvador Bernal).

Most CCP summer workshops start on March 13 and end on May 8. Contact the Performing Arts Division, Upper Basement, CCP Main Building, CCP Complex, Roxas blvd., Pasay City. Tel nos. 832-2657 or 832-1125 local 1607.

Have a creative summer!

Kiddie shows telecast new episodes

MONTAGE

ON the Nickelodeon channel this month, new episodes of "The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron" are being telecast. Jimmy and his friends blast into space in a new spaceship to mine the aster-rubies, while fighting off space bandits.

On March 26, laugh your heart out with new episodes of "All That." The kids stage "American Idiot" with Kyle as host, Giovonnie, Chelsea and Jack as jurors, and Lisa and Shane as the contestants!

Watch out for your favorite Nicktoons in "Yakkity-Yak," "All Grown Up" (the Rugrats spinoff), "As Told to Ginger," "The Wild Thornberrys" and "The Angry Beavers."

On Nick Jr., more preschool adventures are up with "Blue's Clues," "Dora the Explorer" and "Little Bill." And on Whacked! (for tweens), groove to "My Dad, the Rockstar" and "Sabrina, The Teenage Witch."

'Scooby-Doo 2' premiere

"Scooby-Doo 2: Monster Unleashed" will hold its invitational Red Carpet premiere tonight at SM Megamall. The Mystery Inc. gang led by Freddie Prinze Jr. and Sarah Michelle Gellar returns for more ghost-busting action, as Alicia Silverstone and Seth Green join the cast. The film starts its regular run on March 24.

'Taken'

Steven Spielberg's "Taken," a 10-episode saga about alien abduction, will be shown again on Star Movies from March 22 to April 2 at 7:30 p.m.

The Emmy-winning series tells the stories of three families and their significant role in the history of alien abductions. It stars Dakota Fanning, Joel Gretsch and Eric Close.

Movies on TV

On HBO, March 20 at 1:30 p.m., "Casino." March 21 at 8 p.m., "Minority Report." March 22 at 1:45 p.m., "Devil in A Blue Dress." March 23 at 10:30 p.m., "Save the Last Dance." March 24 at 2:45 p.m., "The Gathering Storm." March 25 at 11:45 a.m., "The Majestic." March 26 at 11:30 p.m., "The Pelican Brief."

On Cinemax: March 20 at 9:30 a.m., "Mandela and De Klerk." March 21 at 11:30 a.m., "The Godfather." March 22 at 3 a.m., "A Man for All Seasons." March 23 at 5:15 p.m., "The Sting." March 24 at 9:45 a.m., "Splendor in the Grass." March 25 at 2 p.m., "Rear Window." March 26 at 6:45 p.m., "And the Band Played On."

THE CAST of Nickelodeon's "All That."

How to live properly

LOTUS POND

R. Valencia and S. Bismark

IT is interesting to note how many people aspire for government positions, being attracted by power and authority. Not many consider the heavy burden of responsibilities and the severe karmic reaction involved in neglect of duty and exploitation of power.

The Vedas are quite specific in instructing leaders and ordinary citizens on how to live properly, and avoid sinful reactions due to ignorance and neglect.

Offenses

We would like to share with you a list of activities considered impious and sinful, as described in the Shrimad Bhagavatam. The following persons are judged punishable for their various offenses:

1. A person who appropriates another man's legitimate wife, children or money.
2. A person who slyly cheats another man, and enjoys his wife and children.
3. A person who accepts his body as his self, and works hard for money to maintain his family; while working to maintain himself and his family, he may commit violence against others.
4. An envious person who commits violence.
5. A person who maintains his own body by hurting others.
6. For the maintenance of their bodies and the satisfaction of their tongues, cruel persons who cook poor animals and birds alive.
7. The killer of a saintly person.
8. A person who deviates from the path of the scriptures in the absence of an emergency.

Innocent person

9. A sinful king or government representative who punishes an innocent person, or who inflicts corporal punishment upon a saintly person.
10. A man who torments insignificant creatures.

(To be concluded)

Email lotuspond108@hotmail.com

Singing tilts are here to stay, says Mr. C

By Andy Bais

CAYABYAB. Dedicated to honing musical talents.

SINGING competitions here become especially prestigious when Ryan Cayabyab is a judge.

Recently, Mr. C chaired the panel of judges of ABS-CBN's "Himig Handog" songwriting competition. He was also part of the panel that judged the hotly contested and controversial "Star In A Million" finals, where some observers raised a howl of protest over Erik Santos' win over consistent topnotcher Sheryn Regis.

Mr. C believes that singing competitions and talent searches are here to stay because we are a poor country. "Others might say *na ganun din sa* America, owing to the popularity of 'American Idol,' but not everyone there is rich. Winning a singing competition is one way of gaining instant fame and fortune," he observes.

But he qualifies that winning doesn't always mean that the champion singer will make it. "It's not only getting the right talent. It also involves getting a good manager, and of course, the 'it' factor."

Music school

Mr. C definitely knows whereof he speaks. For 18 years now, he and wife Emmy, who's also a musician and teacher, have been running Ryan Cayabyab The Music Studio, an alternative music school specializing in developing outstanding musical talents.

For those who want to join singing contests or just to perform pop songs better, the school offers "The Pop Performer" workshop, which teaches the do's and don'ts of pop singing in terms of vocal styling, stage presence and attitude.

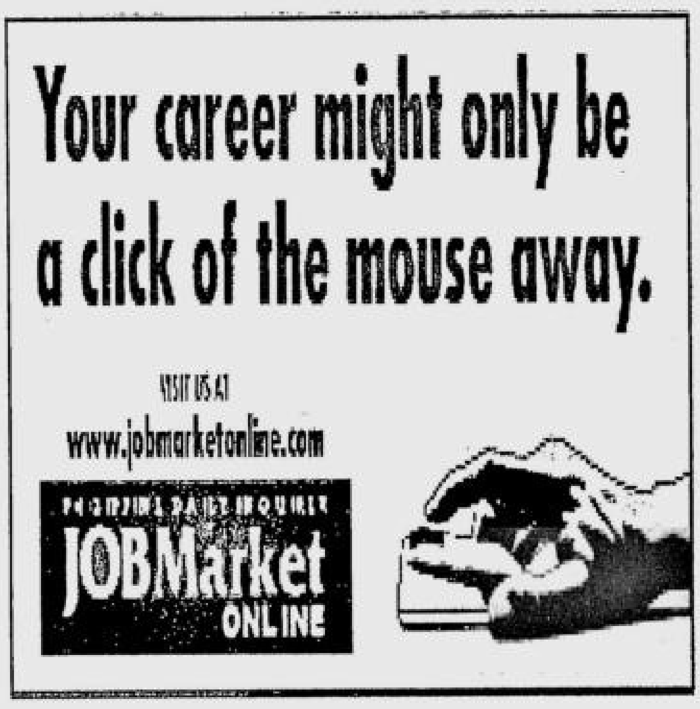
The workshop will be handled by Annie Nepomuceno, a vocal and choral arranger who has worked with major choral groups in the country, including the Philippine Madrigal Singers and the UP Concert Chorus.

Melody

"There will be individualized sessions even if students are in a group," says Mr. C.

"We have to make sure that the song our students choose will suit them. *Usong-uso ngayon ang bali-an* style of singing to the extent *na nawawala na ang* melody. *Ayaw namin silang maging* copycat. How you 'own' a sóng is important—making the song sound like it was made for you! "

Other courses offered this summer include Musikgarten for young children (3 -7 years old). Children's Chorus Class (8-13 years old), and Female Chorus Class (14-20 years old). Audition for chorus classes are on March 27 and April 3. Call 843-8040 or 0917 909-6484.



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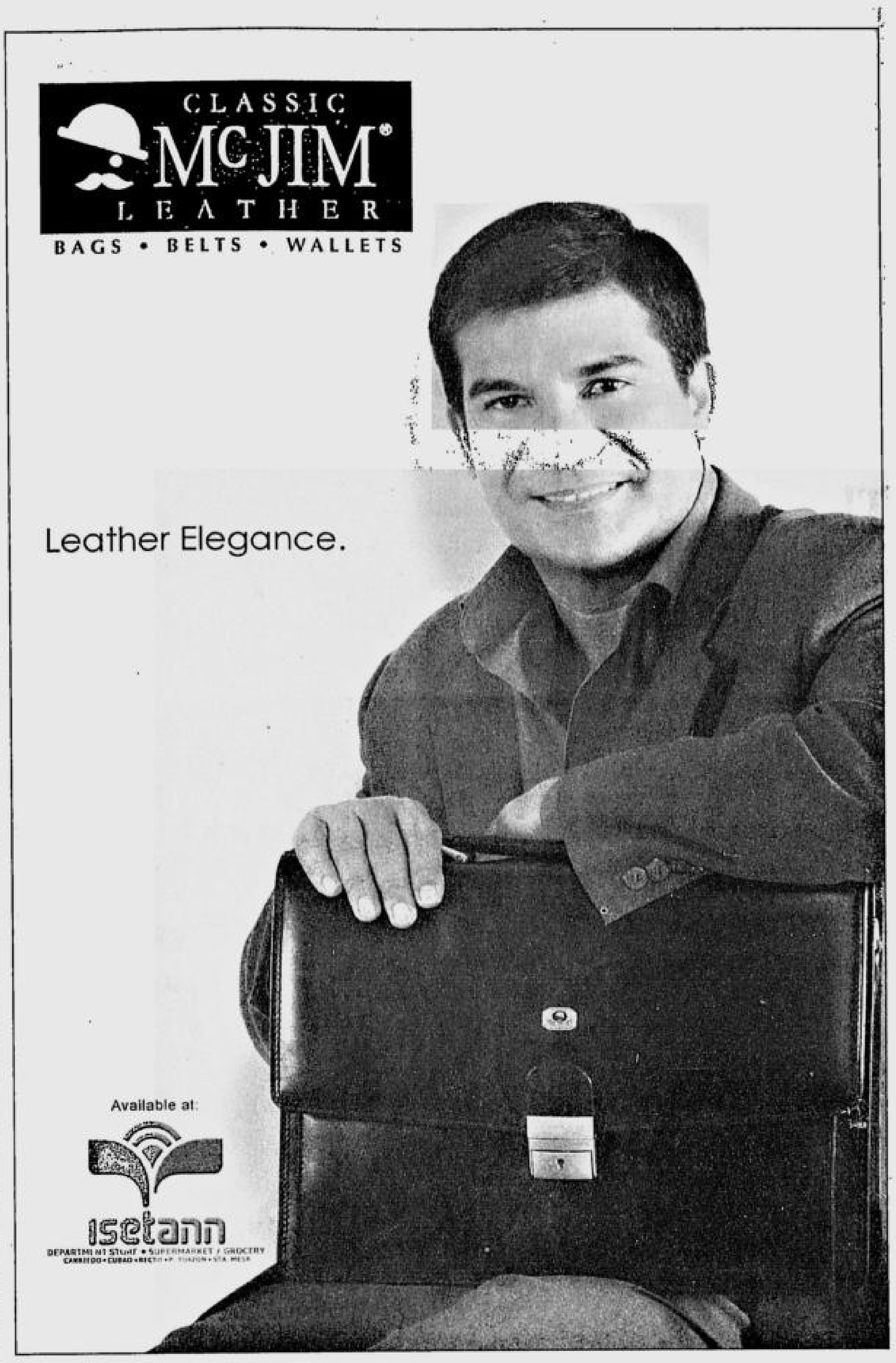

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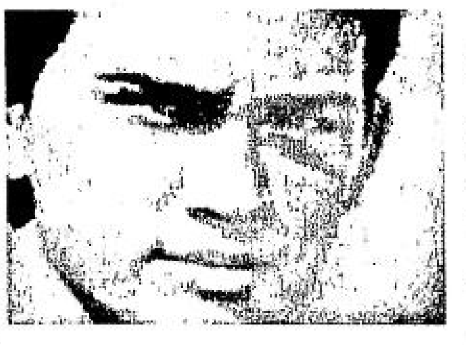
Whatever happened to Billy Crawford in 'Exorcist' prequel?

By Nestor U. Torre



CRAWFORD. Is he in or out?

LAST year, the show biz grapevine veritably buzzed with the hot news that our Billy Crawford was playing a starring role in "The Exorcist: The Beginning," the prequel to the hit 1973 movie about satanic possession that some film buffs hail as "the best horror film ever made."

The news became a source of pride for Pinoy film lovers, since it isn't every day that a Fil-Am talent cops a lead role in a Hollywood production.

After a few more months, however, the reports started to turn less upbeat, and eventually fizzled out.

So, what's happened to the "Exorcist" prequel and Billy's role in it? We've asked around, and have gotten these updates:

Shooting on the prequel is reported to have started in Morocco in November 2002, and moved to Rome's huge Cinecitta studio in January 2003.

Possession

It was directed by Paul Schrader ("Taxi Driver," "Raging Bull"), with Vittorio Storaro ("Apocalypse Now," "The Last Emperor") as cinematographer. Much of its story is set in 1947, in Kenya, where the first case of possession involving the character of Fr. Merrin took place.

Swedish actor Stellan Skarsgaard played Fr. Merrin as a youth (Max von Sydow portrayed the priest as an older man in the first "Exorcist" movie). Other principal actors included Crawford, Gabriel Mann and Clara Bellar.

The shooting of the "Exorcist" prequel appears to have gone well, but after Schrader submitted his completed film, producers were reported to have opined that it didn't contain enough violence. There was a huge argument over this, and Schrader was dismissed.

It was then decided to hire another director and to reshoot some sequences.

New director

Well, those "some sequences" eventually became around 90 percent of the movie. The new director is reported to be Renny Harlin, and reshoots started after Christmas 2003, and are scheduled to wrap up this month, still at Cinecitta.

Skarsgaard is still playing Fr. Merrin, but Gabriel Mann has bowed out of the project, due to schedule conflicts. Clara Bellar's character has been written out of the new story, so she's left the production as well.

James D'Arcy ("Master and Commander") has been brought in to play Fr. Francis, replacing Gabriel Mann. Other new members of the stellar cast include Izabella Scorupco and Alan Ford. Both D'Arcy and Scorupco are reported to be delivering particularly exciting performances during the reshoots.

Finally, the question many people here are asking: What's happened to Billy Crawford? Nothing is definite, but one report tentatively speculates that his character may also have been written out of the new film.

Unique prospect

Say it isn't so, Mr. Harlin! For a more definitive update on this score, *abangan*. But, in case the "writing out" report turns out to be true, it isn't fair to Billy, and to his Pinoy fans who for months have been empathetically savoring the unique prospect of Hollywood stardom for a Fil-Am talent.

—Well, there's always Cesar Montano in "The Great Raid." But we hear that production is also in for some reshoots in Australia.

More stress and insecurity! Hollywood stardom is such an iffy prospect for foreign actors, huh? But we're betting that Cesar's performance will survive those reshoots intact, and that his acting in "The Great Raid" will be noticed.

As for Billy Crawford, we continue to hope against hope that his performance in the "Exorcist" prequel will eventually see the light of film day.

'Gigli' is Razzies' worst

LOPEZ. Big "winner."

LOS ANGELES—The honeymoon's over for Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez, but their mob-comedy flop, "Gigli," really cleaned up two weeks ago at the Razzies, the first movie to take all six top trophies in the annual dishonorable-mention awards.

Golden Raspberry Awards voters picked "Gigli" as 2003's worst picture, Affleck as worst actor, Lopez as worst actress and the two as worst screen couple. "Gigli" filmmaker Martin Brest also took the Razzies for worst director and screenplay.

Tabloid frenzy

"Gigli" hit theaters last summer amid the tabloid frenzy over Affleck and Lopez's on-again, off-again wedding plans. They finally announced in January that the romance was off.

The movie, which starred Affleck as a thug smitten by Lopez as a lesbian crime colleague, fell short of the record seven Razzies won by "Showgirls" and "Battlefield Earth."

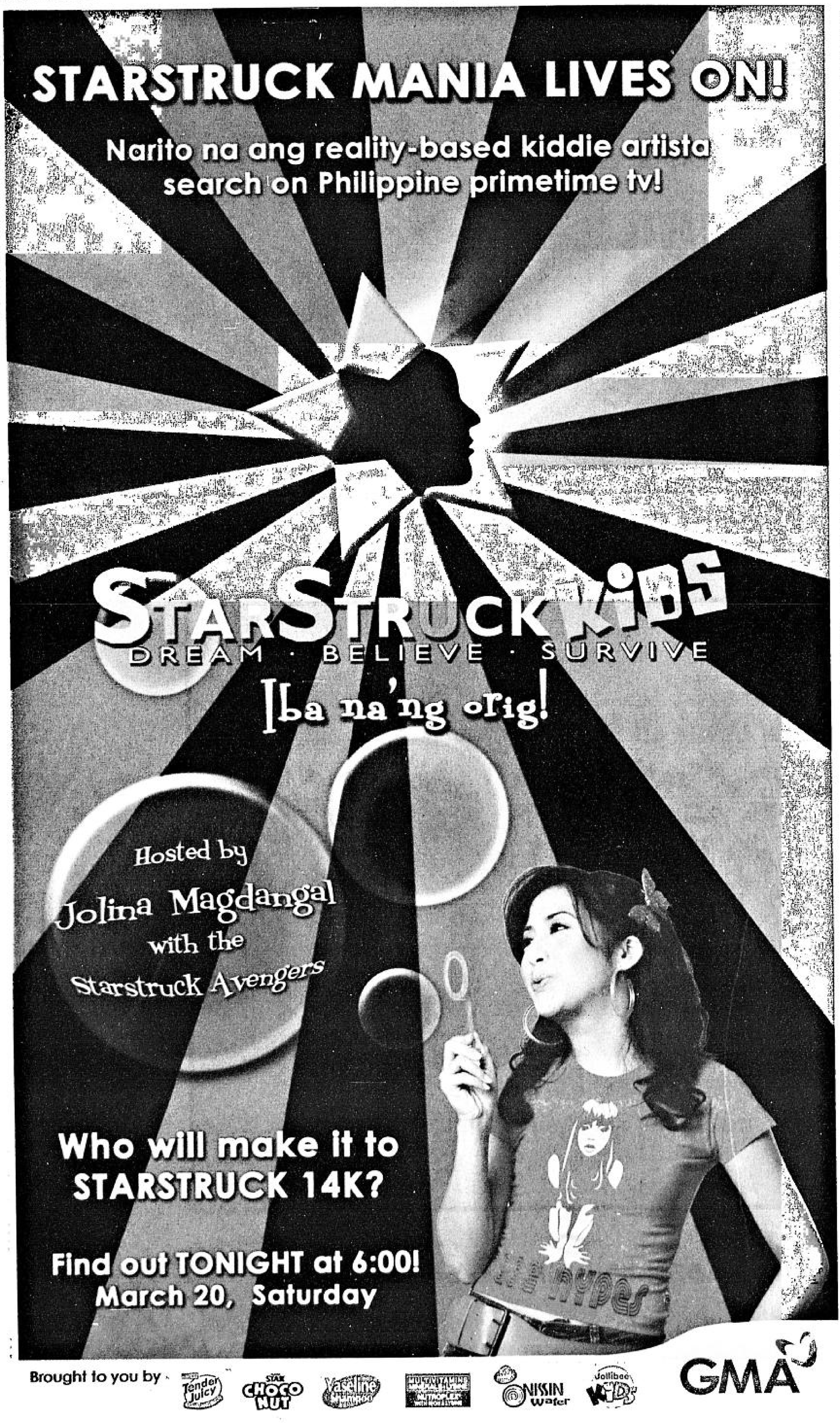
"But those are much better bad movies, if that makes any sense," said Razzies founder John Wilson.

"Gigli" cost $54 million to make but earned back just $6 million.

Among other "winners," Sylvester Stallone "won" worst supporting actor ("Spy Kids 3-D). Stallone's past Razzies include one for worst actor of the 20th century.

With the 25th annual Razzies coming up next year, the group is considering a special career-achievement prize for Stallone, Wilson said.

Demi Moore took the supporting actress Razzie for her comeback role in "Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle," which was also named worst remake or sequel. AP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STREEP. Early training as opera singer.

Meryl Streep is versatility personified

By Behn Cervantes

MERYL Streep, one of the most highly esteemed actresses in Hollywood, has already upstaged acting icon Katharine Hepburn as per the number of Academy Award nominations (13) she has received in a relatively short career.

However, to set the record straight, Hepburn still holds the record because *all* of her 12 nominations were in the best actress category, while Meryl has had supporting role nominations as well.

Divorce drama

Streep's first Academy Award was for the divorce drama, "Kramer Versus Kramer," where she played a supporting role.

She is admired not only by critics but also by her peers, who find working with her a great privilege. In her debut film, "Julia," she acted with Jane Fonda and Vanessa Redgrave.

She was then given challenging roles in vehicles with the likes of Dustin Hoffman, Clint Eastwood and Robert Redford.

Like many great actresses, she was thoroughly prepared, beginning with her early training as an opera singer. She got more interested in acting, however, so she quickly began playing leads in school productions.

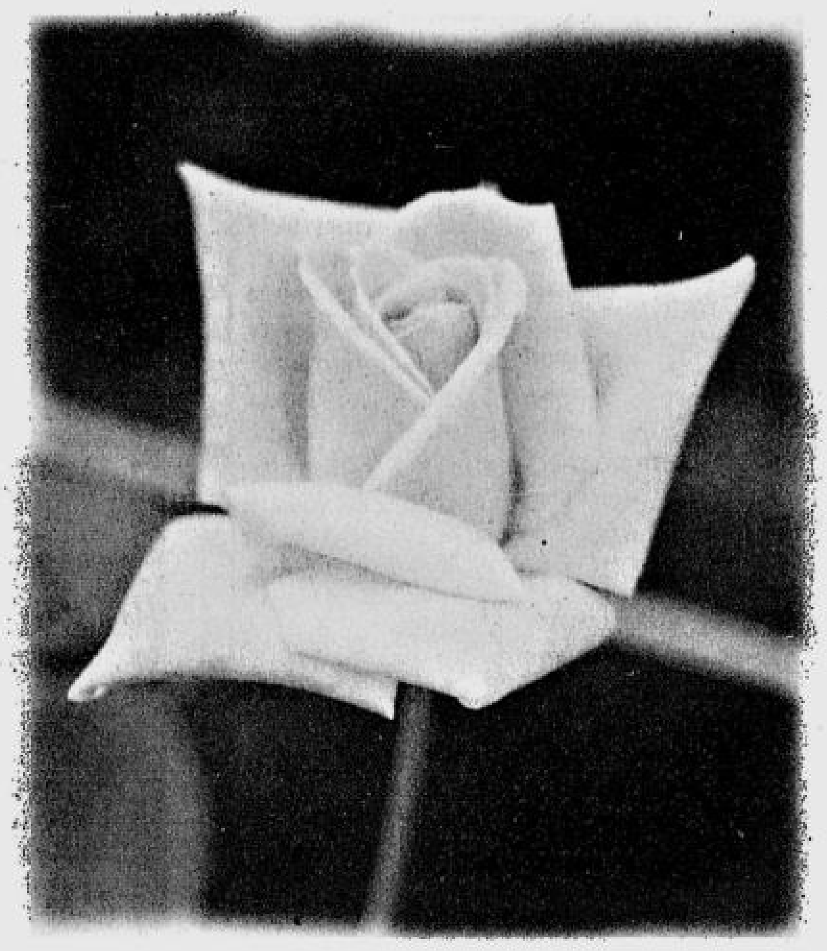
She later majored in drama at Vassar, and spent a term at Dartmouth before moving to the prestigious Yale School of Drama.

Performance

After "Julia," she was nominated for "Deer Hunter" in 1978, and won the Film Critics Award for her performance in that film. That same year, she copped the Emmy for "Holocaust." Then, she won a best actress Oscar for "Sophie's Choice" in 1982.

She was the love interest of Robert Redford in "Out of Africa," but she has also tackled comic roles with great aplomb. She held her comedic own against Oscar-winner Goldie Hawn in "Death Becomes Her." For a change of image, Hollywood's foremost dramatic actress even roughed it up in "Wild River" with Kevin Bacon.

Considering Meryl's comparative youth, she is bound to win more awards in the years to come. But, can she equal the four Academy Awards Hepburn won in the best actress category? It will be our pleasure to wait and find out!



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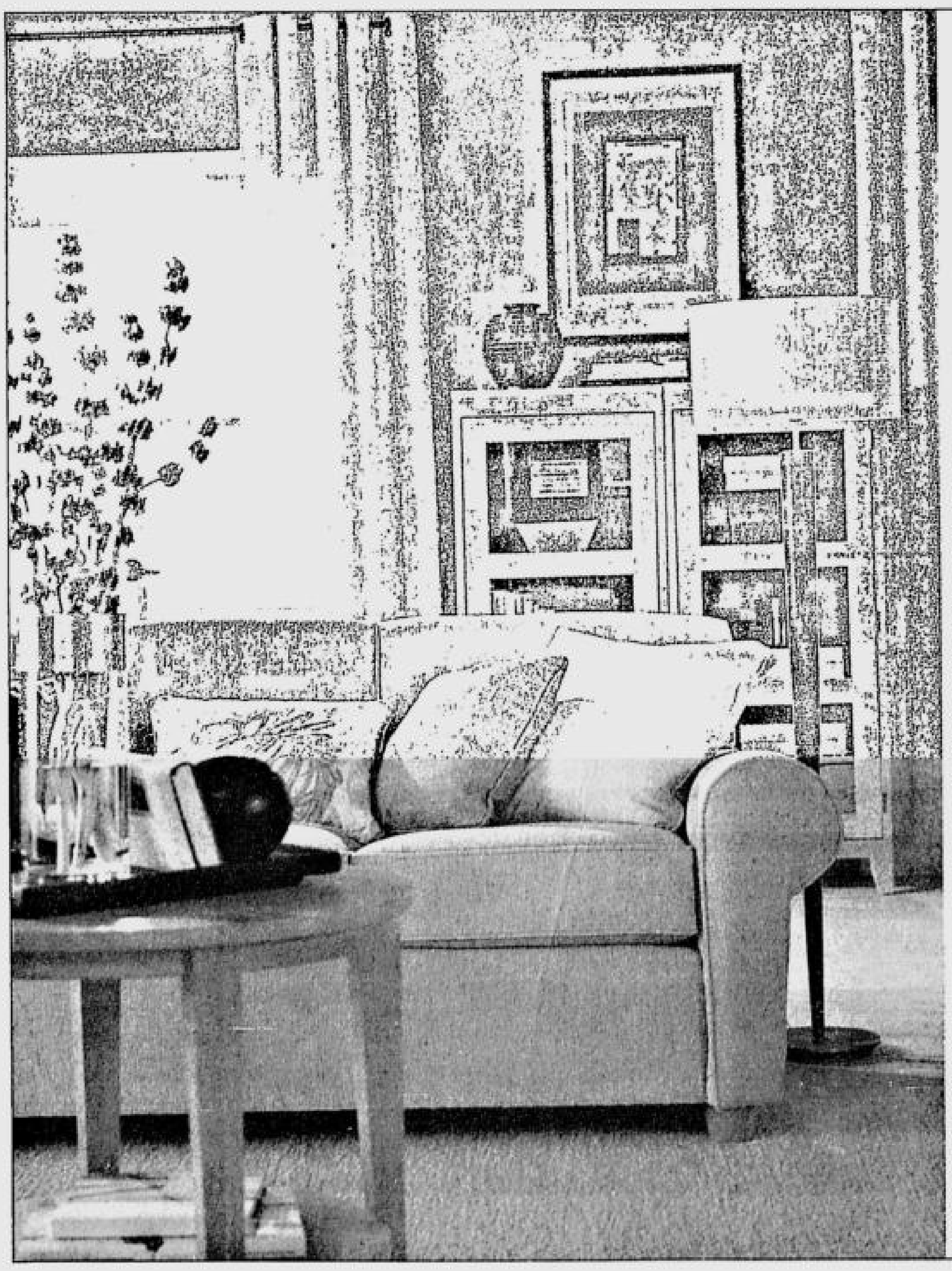

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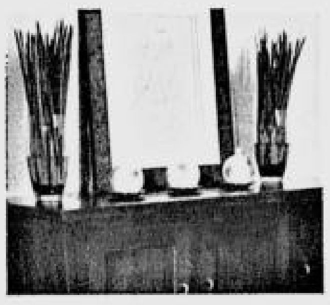

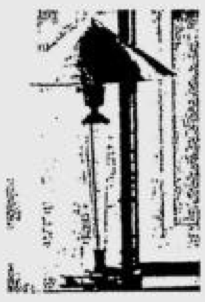

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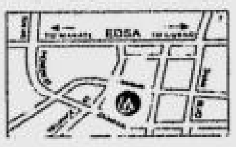

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LAUPER. Playful insistence and childlike pathos.

Cyndi cuts new album

NEW YORK—If you're searching for evidence that 50 is the new 40, as the saying goes, you need look no further than Cyndi Lauper, the endearing dumb-like-a-fox kook, whose kewpie-doll face and piercing little-girl voice suggest a fusion of Betty Boop and Melanie Griffith.

Lauper, a mid-1980s star who briefly gave Madonna a run for her money, has settled easily into the mini-niche of fair-haired rockers in the bohemian tradition of Deborah Harry, the first blond bombshell to flaunt an ironic sense of herself as a real-life animated character.

And at Town Hall last week, Lauper, who recently released her first album of pop standards, "At Last" (Epic), exuded enough energy and high spirits to suggest that 50 might be the new 30.

Short breaks

Because the concert was being recorded for a DVD, it involved several short breaks in which Lauper's hair was primped and her face powdered. But the interruptions failed to dampen her fans' enthusiasm.

Lauper's voice is a personality voice with clout: high-pitched but strong and flexible, with raw emotion often undercutting delicacy and nuance. If she projects a mixture of playful insistence and childlike pathos as much as she did two decades ago, the novelty element has been pushed to the background.

New concerts

She is also someone not in awe of her own or anyone else's past. "At Last" may not be polished, but Lauper's readiness to bring new concepts to old songs makes it one of the three or four most daring albums of standards in recent years by rock-era singers.

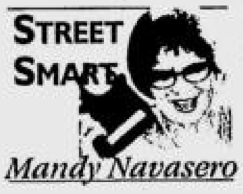
Lauper treated the album's 1940s title song, which Etta James redefined for the rock era, as a gospel-flavored cry of triumph. But the most personal moment was a plaintive, throaty voice-and-piano rendition of Jacques Brel's "If You Go Away."

But the concert's most warmly received number was Lauper's heart-on-sleeve rendition of Tom Kelly and Billy Steinberg's "True Colors."

The song has become something of a gay anthem since Lauper made it a No. 1 hit in 1986—and that's how the audience greeted it!

New York Times

Tough lady for demanding times



Mandy Navasero

EDWINA Lema Beech retains the poise and grace of the dancer she used to be, but she has successfully reinvented herself into a respected licensed land-based recruitment and entertainment exporter.

Her company, Mabuhay Personnel and Management Services Inc., has deployed more than 2,000 Filipinos to the Middle East, Lebanon, Spain, Japan, the USA, Guam, and Singapore.

It is one of the first land-based promotions companies certified to ISO 9001:2000 in the Philippines by TUV Product Service Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd.

Pride

Edwina takes pride in helping generate the inflow of some $6 to $8 billion brought into the country by overseas contract workers (OCW).

Today, there is a need to toughen it up even more as the entertainment export industry brings its long-simmering complaints against Tesda to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Demanding times, indeed, and who better to meet the challenge than one tough lady—Edwina Lema Beech!

Photoworkshop

Our Summer Photoworkshop will run from April 3 to May 29. Lectures are held every Saturday, 2 to 5 p.m. at The Mandy Navasero PhotoPro Studio at Rm. 227, LRI Business Plaza, 210 Nicanor Garcia st., Bel-Air II, Makati City. Call 899-1767 and 896-3208, or e-mail at mn_photocom@i-manila.com.ph.

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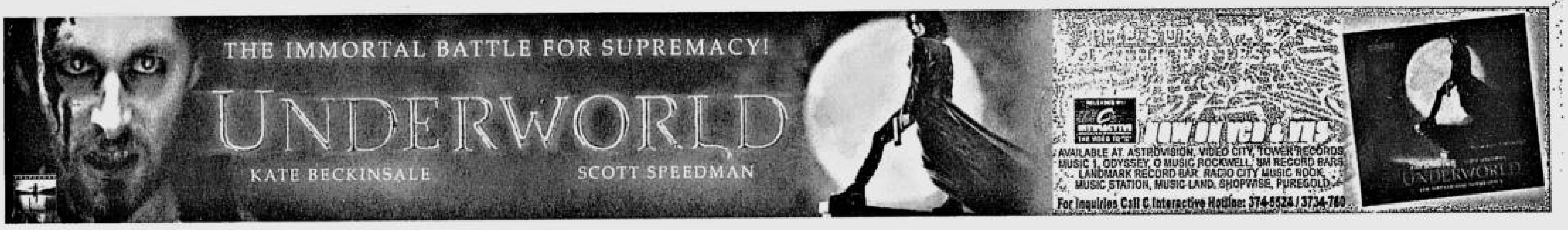

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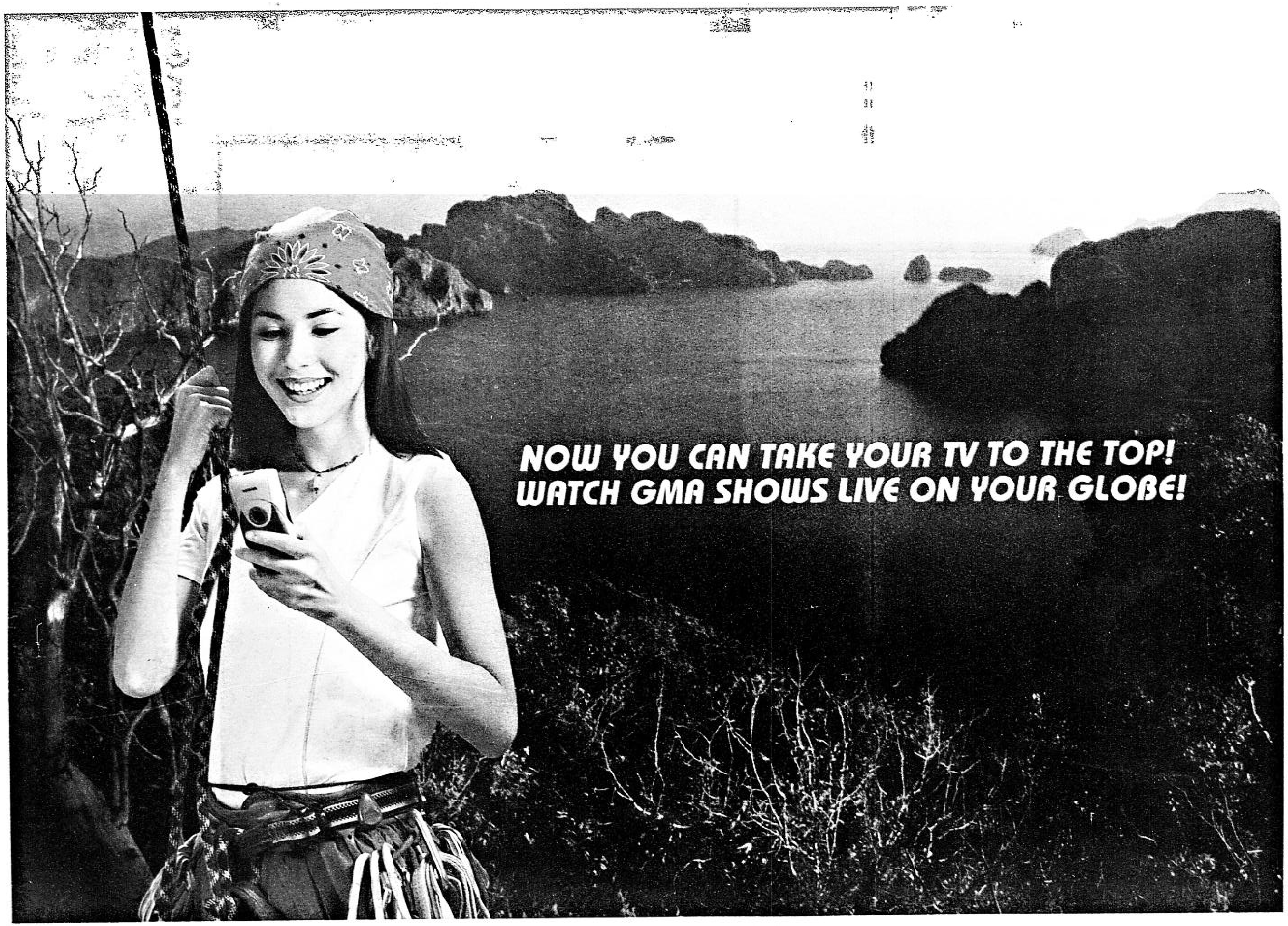
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Celine Dion's theatrical show weaves music and magic

DION. Pomp and dazzling visuals.

SHOW BIZ Q & A

Rito P. Asilo

FROM Shaina Aclan: **"One simple request: Celine Dion!"**

What would you do if a $95-million theater is built specifically for you? For Celine Dion, she would enjoy the best of both worlds: family and career—in that order.

In 2000, Dion bade her successful singing career goodbye to make time for a family that had to take the back seat while she was climbing her way to the top of the music industry. She had no regrets, but she wondered if there was a way to be a hands-on mother and wife and still sustain the lucrative career that offered her so much personal fulfillment.

Answer

Then, Celine saw "O," the magical, theatrical spectacle by Cirque du Soleil creator Franco Dragone—and she found her answer!

When "Another Day: Celine in Las Vegas" finally opened last year, the Canadian power belter admitted to opening night host Justin Timberlake that she has indeed found a home: "My first priority is to be a mother. I don't want my son to grow up on the road."

Watching the opening night special that documented the show (to be telecast on Star World on March 31 at 10 p.m. with replays on April 1 and 4), we could only gape as we beheld the musical extravaganza that had the pomp and visual magic only a $95-million venue (The Colosseum of Caesar's Palace) could offer.

In Franco Dragone's imagination, Celine Dion, and everything and everyone around her, took flight—literally!

As Celine sang the line "I felt the earth move through my head . . . like the trembling heart of a captive bird" in "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," she slowly began to float on air, as a dancer pranced gracefully around her without losing his form, which could have been limited by the laws of gravity.

There's much to rave about: Mia Michaels' choreography had the reed-thin diva demonstrating some terpsichorean

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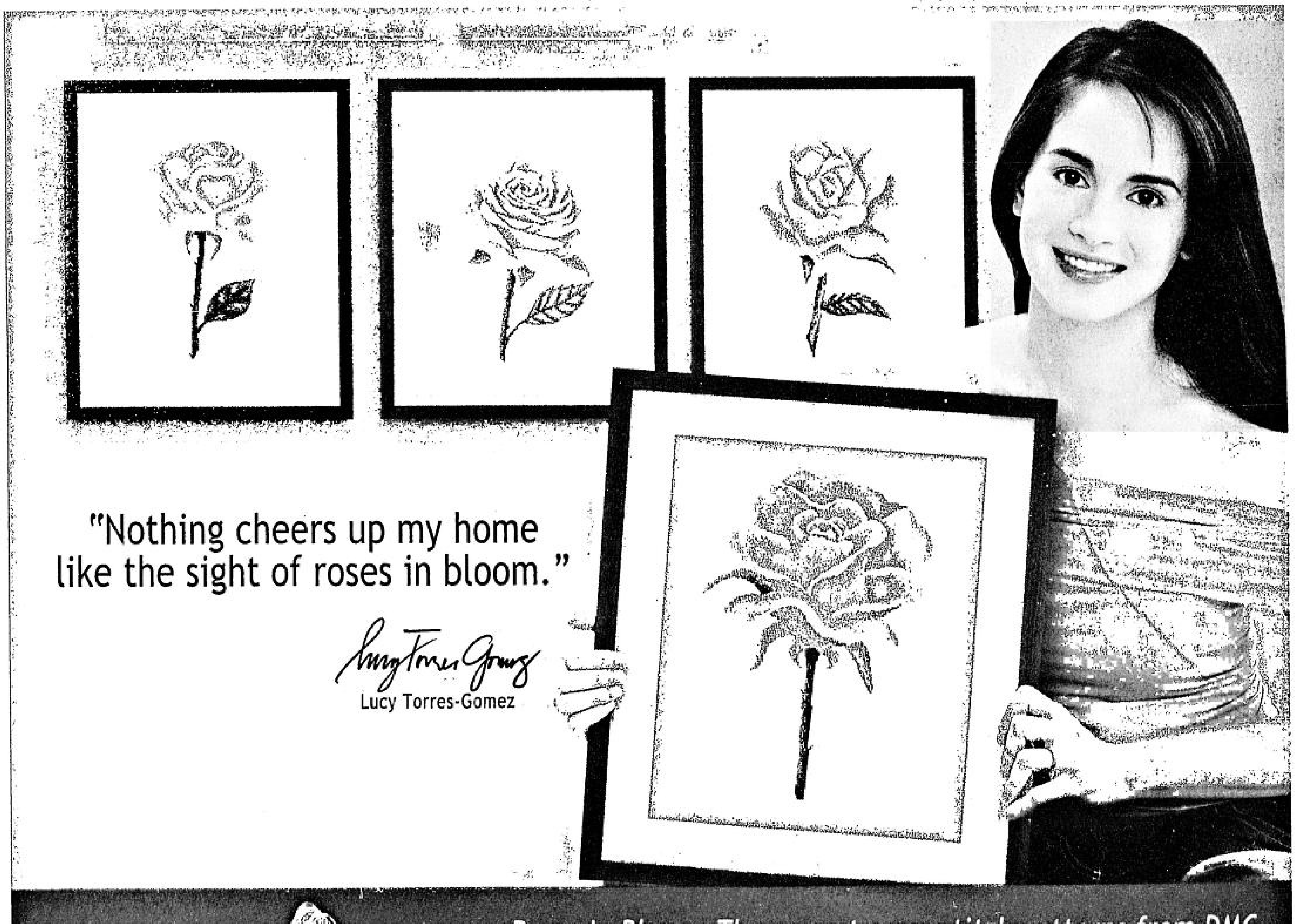
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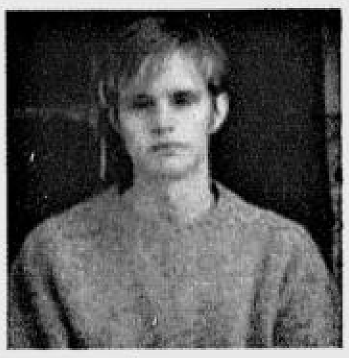
Exploring the magnitude of bigotry

By Rito P. Asilo



SHEPARD. Cause celebré.

"PEOPLE are always threatened by anything different," says a character in the film adaptation of Moises Kaufman and his Tectonic Theater group's stage production, "The Laramie Project." By "different," he means being openly gay in a staunchly conservative community.

The film examines the vicious beating and brutal murder of gay Wyoming university student Matthew Shepard and the succeeding media frenzy and public outrage that reverberated all the way to the White House.

Based on 200 interviews in six trips conducted by Kaufman's theater group, "The Laramie Project" follows the chronology of events that commences with Matthew's visit to a local bar in Laramie, Wyoming (the town does not have a gay bar).

Shepard meets two young men who deceive him into leaving with them. They strike him in the head with a pistol, beat him to a pulp, tie him almost lifeless to a fence, rob him and leave him for dead.

Eighteen hours later, he is found utterly unrecognizable, and in a coma.

Shaken witness

A shaken witness recalls, "The only place without blood was where he had been crying down his face." Four days later, Shepard died.

Filmed in the town (population: 26,687) where the crime took place, the movie mixes real footage with reenactment of events, and boasts of an all-star cast (Peter Fonda, Joshua Jackson, Christina Ricci and, yes, Bill Clinton).

It explores violence and homophobia as seen through the eyes of Laramie's residents, like Shepard's lesbian academic mentor, the passerby who found the body, and the female police officer who is stricken with mortal fear after learning that she has been exposed to AIDS during the rescue.

Like Tony Kushner's unforgettable "Angels in America" (a staging of which concludes the movie) and Diana Son's provocative "Stop Kiss," "The Laramie Project," which won at the Berlin filmfest in 2002, exposes the individual biases of the residents of a small town that is forced to reexamine its conscience and its attitudes toward sexuality, AIDS and violence.

It seeks to understand the magnitude of hate and bigotry. However, by pursuing as many perspectives as it has—quite a number of them cloyingly melodramatic and repetitive—it dilutes the narrative flow and, in the process, sacrifices character depth, specifically Shepard's, and makes it less affecting than it should have been.

True story

Fortunately, Kaufman is smart enough to rein in the temptation to overly dramatize the already gripping tale. The movie stops short of becoming manipulative and overdone by capitalizing on its strongest point—its true story.

And, if the film's tale of hate is disheartening, Shepard's father offers an inspiring—and hopeful—act of faith: In a statement to the court that was about to sentence one of the murderers, the distraught father was eloquent in expressing his love for his fallen son, his anger for the unnecessary violence—and his compassion for the person who took his son's life.

"The Laramie Project" will be shown on March 24 (2 p.m., 11 p.m.) and 27 (11 a.m., 8 p.m.) on HBO.

Dissonance and distortion on local TV newscasts

By Nestor U. Torre

FOREIGNERS who watch our TV newscasts for the first time get shocked not just by the shows' high violence and sex quotients, but also by many newscasters' strident and over-emphatic delivery.

Microphone

Quite a number of our TV newscasters don't report the news, they shout it—as though the microphone had yet to be invented.

Some of our male newscasters favor an overly macho and even "bulldog" style of delivery, every word they bark out reeking of testosterone and pugnacity.

And a number of our female newscasters sound shrill, testily complaining about all of the bad news they report, with a lot of subjective facial reactions thrown in for good measure.

All of these perceived reporting tics and icks are a far (and loud) cry from the TV news ideal: the newscaster toning himself down so the viewer's focus is exclusively on the news, as it should be.

Executives

What accounts for this dissonance and distortion? First, unlike in the years before the Edsa Revolution, newscasts have become *masa* fare.

So, TV executives have made them more colorful and "entertaining" than they should be, hence the use of "star" newscasters, musical scoring, sound effects, melodramatic or pugnacious sound bites, etc.

This accounts for the widely-perceived "tabloidization" of the local TV news, and the "performance" instead of simple reportage that some TV newscasters now indulge in.

—Objectivity be whacked, but so what? The additional volume and "drama" is supposed to make the news more accessible and interesting to relatively uneducated viewers, so the buck stops *there*.

This is unfortunate, because objectivity and lack of embellishment are central to the news-gathering, news-reporting and news-appreciating process.

Only when facts are kept as objective as possible can viewers properly and informedly evaluate a news item, and what it means to them, and to the country.

Evaluation

Now that things have become "colorful" and subjective, viewers may be more entertained, but they are less productively informed, and their evaluation of the news becomes as subjectively unreliable as the "tabloid-ized" reports that are being yelled at them.

Some of these excesses can be traced back to radio. Since field reports on radio newscasts don't have the benefit of visuals, reporters feel they should compensate for this perceived lack by making their aural reportage louder, more dramatic and colorful than the event they're covering really is.

Thus, when some radio reporters talk about one house burning up, it's like a whole subdivision has burst into flames. —And, when a subdivision is gutted by fire, it's like World War Three has exploded!

Spectacle

Sadly, these compensating gambits on radio have been carried over to TV news reportage. So, what we get is the strident and pugnacious spectacle on our TV newscasts that has been turning so many viewers off.

How long will this unenlightened state of affairs persist? As long as dissatisfied viewers don't complain about it, and don't assert their right to objective reportage from our TV networks and news anchors—who should be serving them, instead of the other way around.

Celine Dion's theatrical show . . .

From page E1

skills we never knew existed.

Boundless energy

Dion filled the stage with a boundless energy that rippled through the whole theater, like the spellbinding images that her techno-magicians conjured up: birds flying as if they were choreographed, air instruments and baby grand pianos wafting through the air, and a gazillion lights that established the mood of production numbers.

More than its visual grandeur, the show worked best when Dion opened her heart to her audience—when she pitched for peace, or when she talked about her only son. Like Barbra Streisand, she came up with a numbingly mushy maternal tribute:

"There are days when you think that the world has gone mad. Everyday, we hear stories that break our hearts. And yet, everyday, as soon as I wake up, I go quietly to the crib of my baby boy and watch him sleep, and I think that millions of tiny hands like his will grow to grasp the future. If we give them a chance, their world will truly be a wonderful world."

Babies

And then she sang "What a Wonderful World," as cameras caught black-and-white, stop-start glimpses of faces of people in her audience cradling their babies, holding hands, and so on.

And, of course, there's the singing. Vocally, there's nothing this woman can't do—pop, jazz, blues, gospel, rock, scatting, growling, cooing—name it! Like Michael Bolton, she may not be everybody's cup of tea, but nobody can deny her superior vocal talent.

SNACK hosts acting camp for kids, April 23-25

PASCUA. Resource speaker.

FOR the first time since it began holding camps, SNACK (Summer Nature and Arts Camp for Kids) will offer a primer in the performing arts in the "Akting na Akting" camp for boys and girls, ages 7-13, Friday, April 23 to Sunday, April 25, St. John's Academy, 148 Jose Gil st. (near Pinaglabanan Church), San Juan.

Other aspects

To be conducted by Nestor U. Torre, respected playwright, director, actor, screenwriter, PDI section editor and columnist, the "Akting na Akting" workshop will tackle the basics in acting, and offer introductions to other aspects of theater. Other instructors are Rito Asilo, theater actor and director for New Voice Company productions, and Andy Bais, singer, theater actor and production person.

Guest resource speakers are Bodjie Pascua, popular theater personality and host of long-running children's television shows "Batibot" and "Apol Epol," and Ramon "Montet" Acoymo, international tenor, and chair of the Voice Department, UP College of Music.

Freelance journalist and talent manager Bibsy Carballo conceived SNACK in 1999, which was held in Talisay, Batangas and offered modules in sports and the arts.

Call 721-0801, 726-7164, 724-1762 or (0917) 899-1835.

Choosing the right cookbooks

WORD OF MOUTH

Sandy Daza

MOST households all over the world do their own cooking. Many of their recipes are either handed down from parents, or creations whipped up by adventurous cooks. When a dish is prepared too often, everyone soon gets tired of it. The key is good taste and variety.

There are many sources for a new recipe. Cooking shows and the Net are great sources. But choosing also requires experience. I rely on word of mouth from friends who share my taste.

Popular dish

I have learned from good cookbooks, but not all cookbooks are user-friendly. Cookbooks that claim to have the recipe of a popular dish from a fancy restaurant could leave out its important ingredients.

So, how do we choose good cookbooks?

Look at the ingredients and proportions given. Are they easy to find? Are the proportions precise? Do the ingredients appeal to your taste? Here are some suggestions:

Bon Appetit magazine offers very good recipes. At the end of each year, when they come out with the best of Bon Appetit, I make sure I get a copy.

Among the Philippine cookbooks, my mom's "Let's Cook With Nora" still tops the list. As of this writing, close to half a million copies have been printed. The recipes are simple, the ingredients easy to find and the instructions doable.

Techniques

A new cooking show in North America, "Barefoot Contessa," has made Ina Muerten very popular. Muerten's recipes may be simple but the results are outstanding. She also shares techniques that are helpful in the kitchen.

I've come up with my own book, titled "Happy Eating," edited by Liana Romula. The ingredients we use are inexpensive and easy to find.

Happy eating!

Email me at sandy-daza@shaw.ca

YOUR WEEKLY TV GUIDE FROM MARCH 20 - MARCH 26

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[illegible]	6 00 TV Patrol 7 00 Star Circle Quest 8 00 Basta't Kasama Kita 8 30 Marina 9 00 Sana'y Wala Nang Wakas 9 30 It Might Be You 10 00 Star Cinema Presents 11 00 Insider 11 30 Private I	6 00 Paco Park Presents 7 00 Family Rosary Crusade 8 00 TeleDyaryo 10 00 The Working President 11 00 Pilipinas Ngayon Na!	6 00 Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko 6 30 Balitang-Balita 7 00 PBA Games 9 30 Single 10 00 INQ TV 10 15 The Big News 10 45 Friday Box Office *Jesus (Part II)*	6 15 24 Oras 7 00 Extra Challenge 7 30 Twin Hearts 8 00 Te Amo 8 30 Love Letter 9 00 Hanggang Kailan 9 30 Bubble Gang 11 00 Saksi 11 30 Emergency	6 00 Invader Zim 6 30 Entertainment Tonight 7 00 Just for Laffs 7 30 Dharma & Greg 8 00 Enterprise 9 00 Dead Zone 10 00 Newswatch Now 10 30 TV Greats on Friday	7 00 Lakbay TV 8 00 CelebrityDatCom 9 00 Entrepinoy (replay) 9 30 Good Take (replay) 10 00 MTV Filler 10 30 IBC News Tonite 11 00 GMA The Working President	6 00 The Chronicle 7 00 X-Men Evolution 7 30 Justice League 8 00 Mutant X 9 00 The Bachelorette 10 00 News Central 10 30 Oprah 11 30 Twilight Zone	6 00 Net 25 Report 6 30 World Report Filipino Edition 7 00 Openline 7 30 Euromaxx 8 00 Auto Motor and Sports 8 30 DWTV Journal 9 00 Ang Tamang Daan 10 00 The Message	6 00 RJ Music Videos 9 00 Music Videos 10 00 Music Videos 11 00 Music Videos

MCCARTNEY. Avid fan of animation.

McCartney back on cartoon trail after two decades

LONDON—Paul McCartney is back on the cartoon trail, 20 years after his best-selling "Rupert And The Frog Song."

The former Beatle, an avid fan of animation since childhood, is releasing "Tropical Island Hum," the tale of Wirral the Squirrel with a Liverpool accent.

Childlike quality

"In animation, it's good to have a bit of childlike quality about yourself—and I certainly have! It's just something that is in me," said McCartney, announcing the imminent DVD release of the short film.

"I'm still fascinated by the things that fascinated me as a kid," said McCartney whose "Rupert" cartoon was the best-selling video of 1984. It was accompanied by the chart hit, "We All Stand Together." *Reuters*

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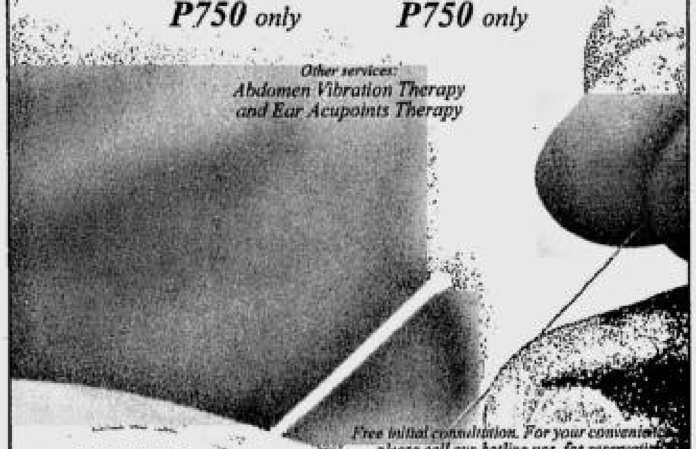

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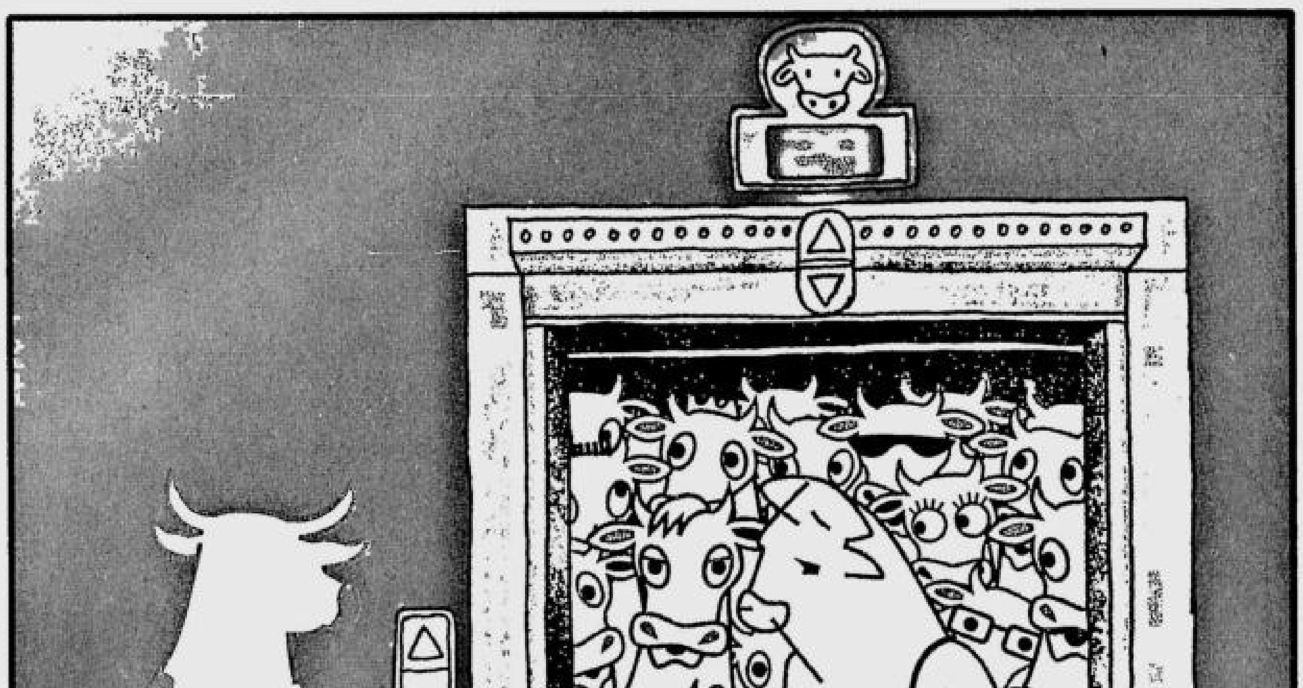
ika-9:00 ng gabi

Hosted by
Ai-Ai de las Alas and John Lapus

Bagong "look". Bagong rules. Bagong saya.
At may bago pang best friend,
si John "Sweet" Lapus, kasama na!

ABC

Knorr



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GMA

SATURDAY *Special*

Heath Ledger is new 'Casanova'

LOS ANGELES—Australian heartthrob Heath Ledger is set to seduce audiences by taking on the role of "Casanova" in a new incarnation of the story of the world's greatest lover, the industry press said.

Ledger, 24, has signed on to star in Swedish director Lasse Hallstrom's version of the consummate ladies' man, a project the director has been nurturing for years, Daily Variety said.

Ledger, whose real-life romance is with Australian Oscar nominee Naomi Watts, will play the seducer who discovered the true meaning of love after meeting a woman whom he could not conquer with his legendary charm alone.

Shooting on the movie will begin in August in Venice.

Medieval swashbuckler

Ledger's star has risen fast in Hollywood in recent years since he starred in 2001's medieval swashbuckler, "A Knight's Tale," and "Monster's Ball" the following year, for which Halle Berry won the best actress Oscar.

Last year, he starred in "Ned Kelly," the story of a legendary Australian highwayman and, in 2002, he made the cooly received period drama, "The Four Feathers."

The busy actor has just completed a role in Terry Gilliam's new film, "The Brothers Grimm," and is set to act for Taiwanese director Ang Lee in "Brokeback Mountain," as well as in the upcoming "The Lords of Dogtown." *AFP*

LEDGER. Plays the seducer who discovered the true meaning of love.

Jane Fonda fights for abused women

BOMBAY—Oscar-winning actress Jane Fonda recently performed in Bombay in the famed play, "The Vagina Monologues," to send a message against exploitation of women and girls in India, the play's director said.

Stage performance

Fonda arrived in India's entertainment and financial capital a day before her stage performance, which coincided with International Women's Day, director Mahabanoo Mody Kotwal told AFP.

FONDA. Message against exploitation.

"The Vagina Monologues" made its name in 1997 as an off-Broadway play that explores female sexuality and strength through a series of vignettes at times funny, sad, graphic or horrifying.

The piece initiated V-Day, a global movement to stop violence against women and girls.

Metamorphoses

Few actresses have had as many metamorphoses as Fonda, the daughter of Hollywood legend Henry Fonda.

Her first husband, French film director Roger Vadim, decided to mold her into a "sex goddess" in a set of films of which the best known was "Barbarella."

She was later involved in anti-US war activities in the Vietnam era, formed her own production company and starred in intelligent and topical films. In the 1980s, she started the aerobic exercise craze.

Fonda, who became a born-again Christian after splitting with her last husband, CNN founder Ted Turner, spent three days in Bombay.

"India taught me I was not a hippie but basically an activist," the Times of India quoted Fonda, 66, as saying.

"Violence against women must end. Without it, the world would be a different place!" *AFP*

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MARCH and APRIL 2004 Class Schedule

March 23, Tuesday, 9am-12nn PASTAS AND MORE! Learn how to make Homemade Pasta, Basic Tomato Sauce, Lasagna, Linguini Carbonara, Spaghetti Putanesca, Seafood Pasta, Penne a la Vodka P 1,500

March 25, Thursday, 9am-12nn ITALIAN REGIONAL COOKING Cheese Stuffed Flour and Water Pancakes, Pasta Squares in Asparagus Cream, Chicken with Roasted Peppers and Basil, Pan Fried Sausages with Grapes, Gorgonzola Topped Pizza with Sweet Onion, Tomato and Cheese Topped Potato Pie P 1,500

March 26, Friday, 9am-12nn SEAFOOD SPECIALS Lapu Lapu in Salted Crust with Herbs, Seared Tuna with Tataki Sauce, Crab Cake Sandwich, Seviche with Saffron Shrimp Stock, Fried Oysters with Sundried Tomato Aioli, Mussels and Chorizo Linguine P 1,500

March 27, Saturday, 8:30am-12:30nn INTRODUCTION TO BAKING A HANDS ON experience for students to learn the basics of baking from the proper way of measuring ingredients to the presentation of the finish product! Chiffon Cake; Coffee Crunch Cake, Sponge Cake, Strawberry and White Chocolate Trifle, Rich Butter Cake, Pie Crust, American Apple Pie P 1,500

March 27, Saturday, 2-5 pm ASIAN COOKING Hainanese Chicken Rice, Thai Springrolls, Chili Crab, Claypot Chicken Rice, Peking Candied Apples P1,200

March 29, Monday and March 30, Tuesday, 9:30am-3pm BRIOCHE AND CROISSANTS Learn to make delicious, buttery, flaky brioche loaves and croissants found at fancy bakeries During this 2-day workshop, each student will go through the whole process of making their own luscious baked goods like Brioche a Tete, Brioche au Sucre, Classic Butter Croissants, Almond Filled Croissant, Pains au Chocolate, Croissant Au Jambon P 4,500 (including Ingredients)

April 1, Thursday 10am-2:30pm PIES and CHEESECAKES Apple Pie with Streusel, Blueberry Cheesecake, Oreo Cheesecake, No Bake Cheesecake, Quiche Lorraine P1,500

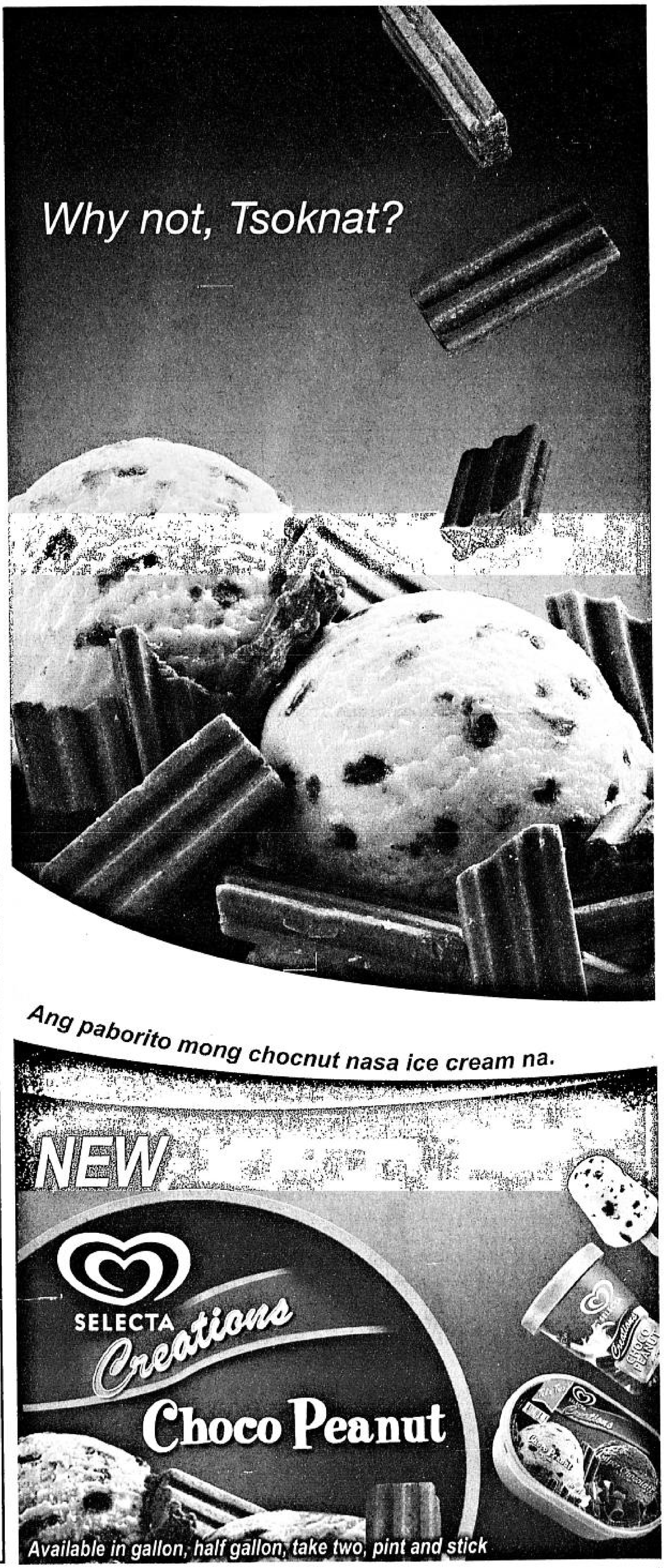
April 2, Friday, 8:30am-12:30pm BROWNIES AND BAR COOKIES Chocolate Cheesecake Brownies, Capuccino Brownies, Kahlua Brownies, Chocolate Fudge Brownies, White Chocolate Pecan Brownies P 1,500

April 3, Saturday, 9am-1pm AN AUTHENTIC PEKING DUCK DINNER Learn to prepare one of China's great culinary delights in your own home. Includes a step by step preparation of the duck up to the final method of serving the dish. You will prepare your own pancakes, as well as learn to make Stir Fried Duck with Scallions and Chives plus the Duck Soup P 2,500

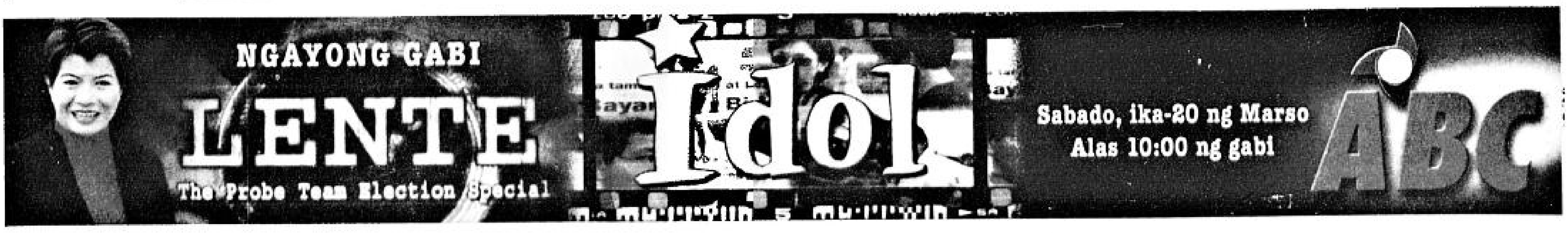
April 3, Saturday, 2 - 5 pm VIETNAMESE COOKING Goi Cuon (Summer Rolls), Cha Gio (Spring Rolls), Chao Tom (Shrimp Mousse on Sugarcane), Goi Moc (Squid Salad), Bun Grilled Pork and Pineapple Salad, Shrimp and Green Mango Salad, Crab and Pomelo Salad, Braised Mushroom P 1,500

*Please call for reservation

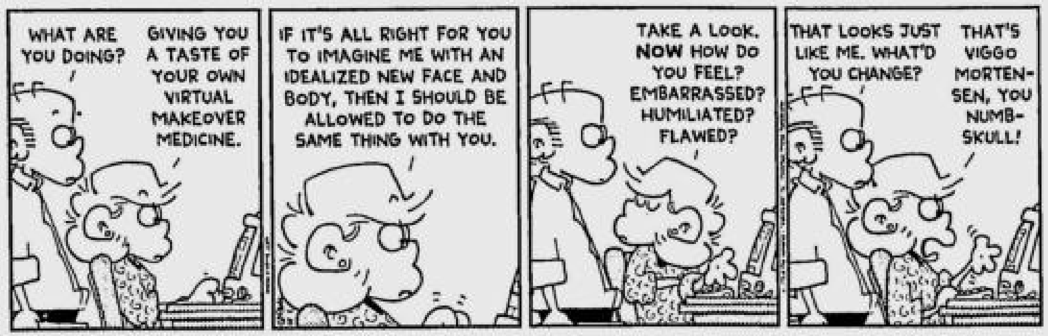
PUREFOODS MONTEREY



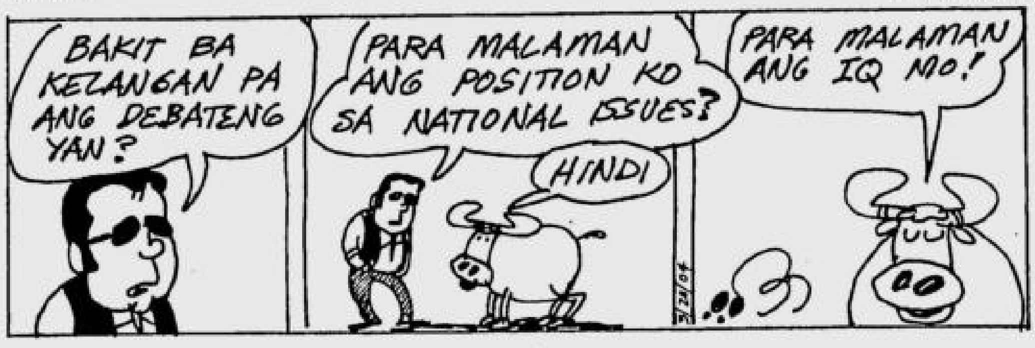
Why not, Tsoknat?
Ang paborito mong chocnut nasa ice cream na.
NEW
SELECTA Creations
Choco Peanut
Available in gallon, half gallon, take two, pint and stick



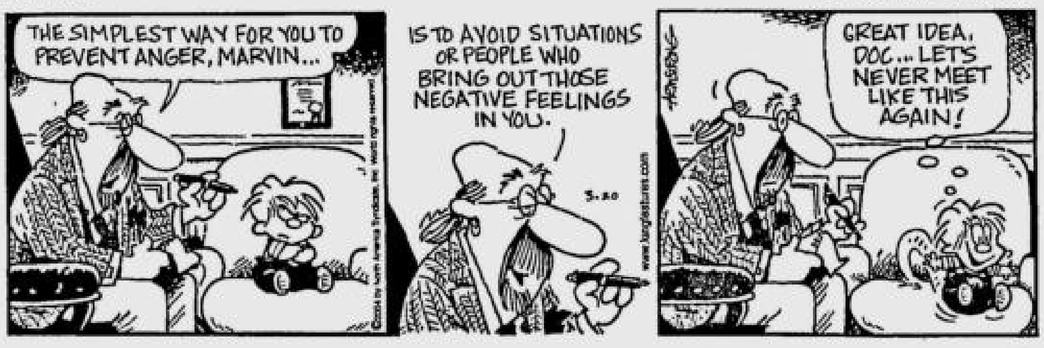
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
GIVING YOU A TASTE OF YOUR OWN VIRTUAL MAKEOVER MEDICINE.
IF IT'S ALL RIGHT FOR YOU TO IMAGINE ME WITH AN IDEALIZED NEW FACE AND BODY, THEN I SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DO THE SAME THING WITH YOU.
TAKE A LOOK. NOW HOW DO YOU FEEL? EMBARRASSED? HUMILIATED? FLAWED?
THAT LOOKS JUST LIKE ME. WHAT'D YOU CHANGE?
THAT'S VIGGO MORTENSEN, YOU NUMBSKULL!

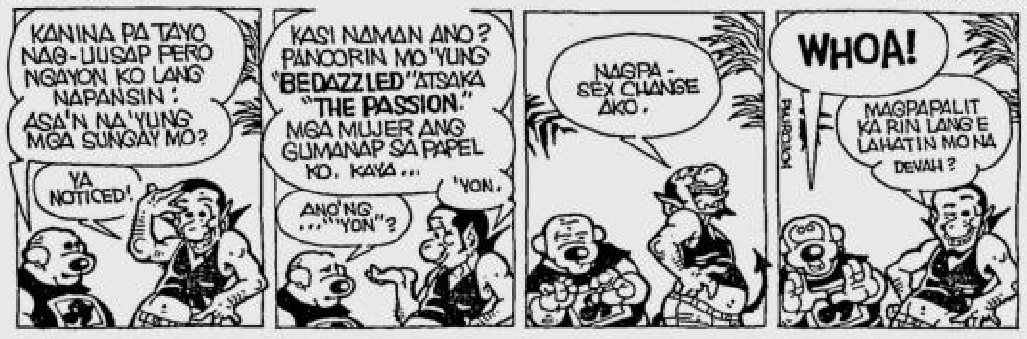
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


BAKIT BA KEZANGAN PA ANG DEBATENG YAN?
PARA MALAMAN ANG POSITION KO SA NATIONAL ISSUES?
HINDI
PARA MALAMAN ANG IQ MO!

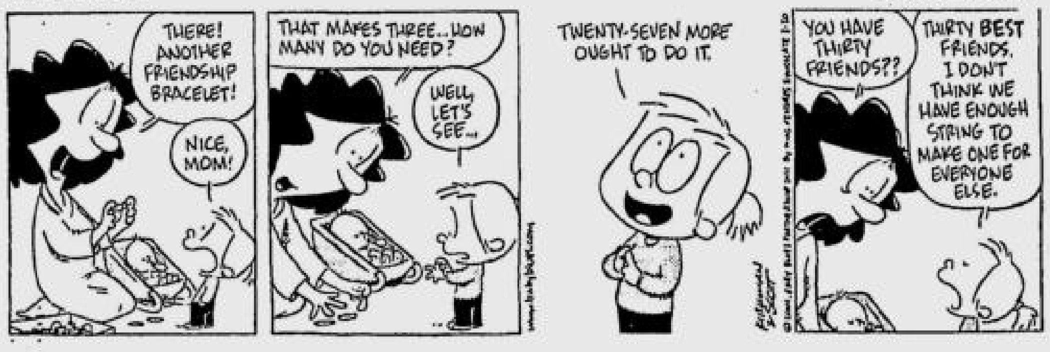
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


THE SIMPLEST WAY FOR YOU TO PREVENT ANGER, MARVIN...
IS TO AVOID SITUATIONS OR PEOPLE WHO BRING OUT THOSE NEGATIVE FEELINGS IN YOU.
GREAT IDEA, DOC... LET'S NEVER MEET LIKE THIS AGAIN!
3.20
www.kingfeatures.com

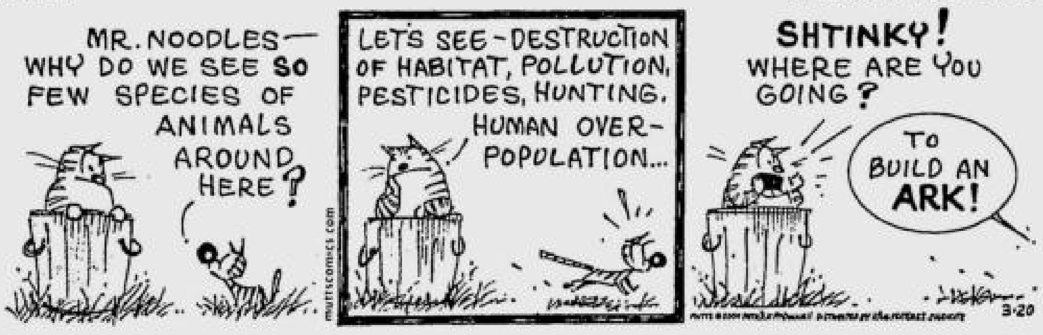
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


KANINA PA TAYO NAG-UUSAP PERO NGAYON KO LANG NAPANSIN: ASA'N NA 'YUNG MGA SUNGAY MO?
YA NOTICED!
KASI NAMAN ANO? PANOORIN MO 'YUNG "BEDAZZLED" ATSAKA "THE PASSION." MGA MUJER ANG GUMANAP SA PAPEL KO. KAYA...
ANO'NG ..."YON"?
'YON.
NAGPA-SEX CHANGE AKO.
WHOA!
MAGPAPALIT KA RIN LANG E LAHATIN MO NA DEVAH?

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


THERE! ANOTHER FRIENDSHIP BRACELET!
NICE, MOM!
THAT MAKES THREE... HOW MANY DO YOU NEED?
WELL, LET'S SEE...
TWENTY-SEVEN MORE OUGHT TO DO IT.
YOU HAVE THIRTY FRIENDS??
THIRTY BEST FRIENDS. I DON'T THINK WE HAVE ENOUGH STRING TO MAKE ONE FOR EVERYONE ELSE.

MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


MR. NOODLES— WHY DO WE SEE SO FEW SPECIES OF ANIMALS AROUND HERE?
LET'S SEE—DESTRUCTION OF HABITAT, POLLUTION, PESTICIDES, HUNTING. HUMAN OVER-POPULATION...
SHTINKY! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO BUILD AN ARK!
muttscomics.com
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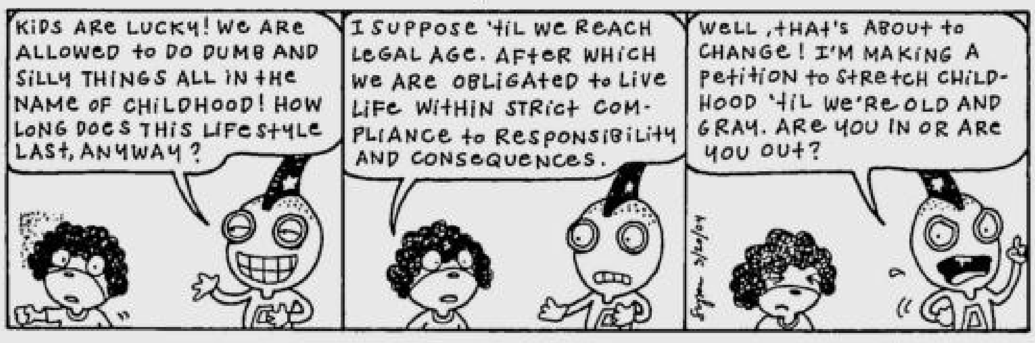
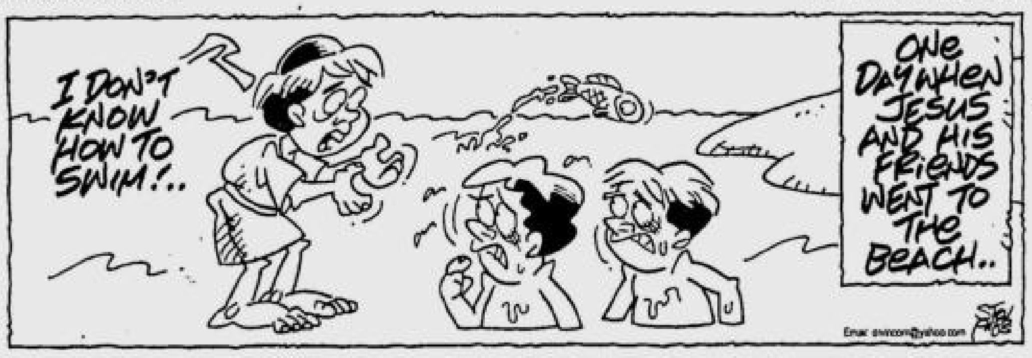
ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


KIDS ARE LUCKY! WE ARE ALLOWED TO DO DUMB AND SILLY THINGS ALL IN THE NAME OF CHILDHOOD! HOW LONG DOES THIS LIFESTYLE LAST, ANYWAY?
I SUPPOSE 'TIL WE REACH LEGAL AGE. AFTER WHICH WE ARE OBLIGATED TO LIVE LIFE WITHIN STRICT COMPLIANCE TO RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSEQUENCES.
WELL, THAT'S ABOUT TO CHANGE! I'M MAKING A PETITION TO STRETCH CHILDHOOD 'TIL WE'RE OLD AND GRAY. ARE YOU IN OR ARE YOU OUT?

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SWIM!..
ONE DAY WHEN JESUS AND HIS FRIENDS WENT TO THE BEACH..

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are both logical and intuitive. Sometimes you're not sure which voice to listen to. Friendships can help you focus on what you want to do in life. You love music, photography and the arts. It's important to keep a positive perspective. (Singing can lift your spirits.) The year ahead focuses on your closest relationships and partnerships.
Birthdate of: Spike Lee, director/writer; William Hurt, actor; Holly Hunter, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): In the next four weeks, you'll have the opportunity to replenish and restore your energy. It's your turn to recharge your batteries for the rest of the year!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Despite your high energy, you need more rest now. But what you really need is downtime to think by yourself and ponder secret dreams. (This is important.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Get ready for a very social month ahead! Quite likely, you'll interact with younger people more than usual. Get ready to entertain new ideas and activities.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Others start to notice you more now for some reason. You'll likely be called upon to accept increased responsibilities, which, in turn, place you in the public eye.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Make some serious travel plans for the future. You're also entertaining ideas related to publishing and higher education. You have a strong desire now to expand your world!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): It's time to sort out red-tape details connected with wills, inheritances, debt, taxes, insurance matters and shared property. Just roll up your sleeves and get down to it.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): At this time of year, the Sun moves far away from you. Because the Sun is a source of energy, you will need more rest than usual. Don't hesitate to pamper yourself.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Work hard now to get better organized. Get rid of what you no longer use or need. Give things away, or sell them. Streamline your possessions now.

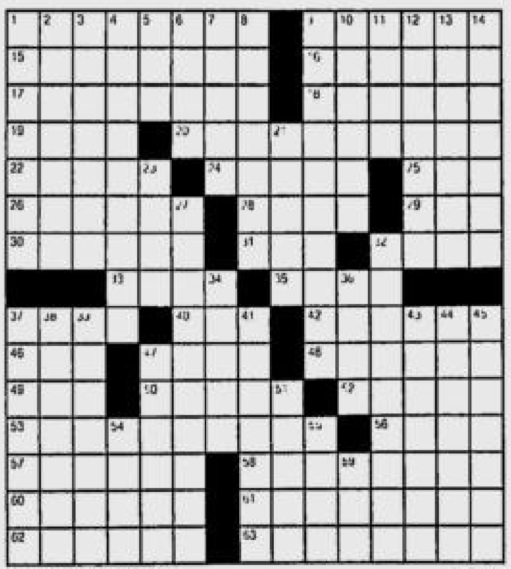
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is a great time for a vacation. In the month ahead, plan on parties, fun getaways and increased playful times with children. Romance is also promising!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): In the next few weeks, you have to turn your attention toward family and domestic needs more than usual. Talk to parents and relatives. Take care of home repairs.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): The tempo of your day-to-day activities starts to accelerate now. Appointments, short trips and increased interaction with siblings keep you busy!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): If you have to do a reality check now, or give yourself a report card, don't base it on what you own. Base it on who you are and how you treat your loved ones.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Matthew Higgins
Concord, NH
3/20/04

ACROSS
1 Antsy
9 Mortar spreader
15 City in the Texas panhandle
16 Fret
17 Amphitheater
18 Overturns
19 Greek letters
20 Gradual increases in volume
22 Plays charades
24 Lively dance
25 Wonderment
26 Puts out on the street
28 Anti-Tweed cartoonist
29 O.T. book
30 Six-line poem
31 Tolkien's talking tree
32 G-men
33 Female sheep
35 Fuss
37 Letters for Nob Hill cops
40 2nd letter add-on
42 Ship's financial officer
46 "__ Be Seeing You"
47 Skewer
48 Fozzie Bear's street
49 Portuguese colony in India
50 Part of the Carpathians
52 Representative
53 Peerless ones
56 Louise or Turner
57 Flowery
58 Tie
60 "__ and Rockin'"
61 Pregnant
62 Dope fiend
63 Returned after intermission

DOWN
1 Lilies of the valley, e.g.
2 Soul-stirring
3 Seasoned sausages
4 Cut in three
5 Fleur-de-__
6 AC/DC power
7 Drink like a pig
8 Important person?
9 Big rigs' layovers
10 Do over again
11 Candid
12 Gun-sight adjustment
13 Supplied with talent
14 Abates
21 Point of view
23 Mishmash dish
27 Cinderella's guardian
32 Yellow-flowered shrub
34 Malicious ill will
36 Piece for two
37 Milano woman
38 Knocked for a loop
39 Arranged in advance
41 "The Lord of the Rings" character
43 Acutely insightful
44 Issue from a source
45 Allied by kinship
47 Motionless
51 Coeur d'__, ID
54 Hinayana Buddhist language
55 Pouchlike structures
59 Aberdeen's river

Friday's Puzzle Solved

R	O	A	N	■	A	W	A	R	D	■	I	N	T	O
A	L	E	E	■	C	O	R	E	R	■	N	E	A	P
F	I	R	S	T	T	O	C	R	Y	U	N	C	L	E
T	O	O	T	H	■	■	H	U	R	T	■	K	E	N
■	■	■	L	O	U	T	■	N	O	I	R	■	■	■
T	I	G	E	R	S	B	E	S	T	C	A	D	D	Y
O	D	A	■	N	E	A	T	■	■	A	G	R	E	E
R	A	Z	E	■	D	R	A	F	T	■	S	O	T	S
C	H	E	A	T	■	■	P	O	O	P	■	N	E	E
H	O	R	R	I	B	L	E	G	O	L	F	E	R	S
■	■	■	P	L	E	A	■	S	L	U	E	■	■	■
I	R	E	■	E	R	N	S	■	■	T	U	L	L	E
B	E	L	F	R	Y	C	U	S	T	O	D	I	A	N
I	S	L	E	■	L	E	M	U	R	■	A	M	M	O
S	T	A	Y	■	S	T	O	N	Y	■	L	E	E	S

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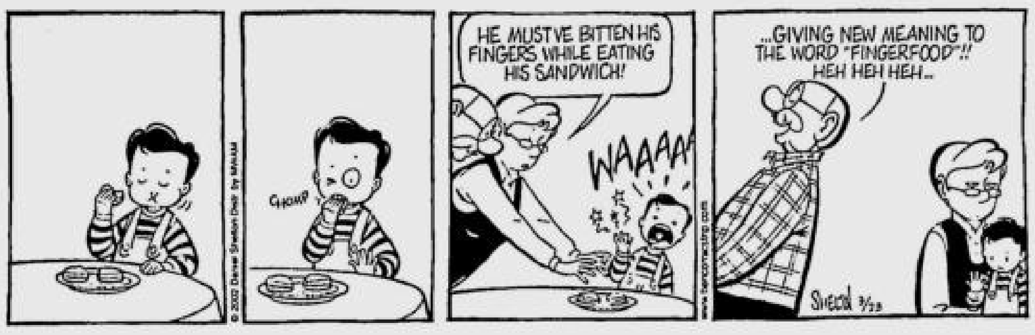
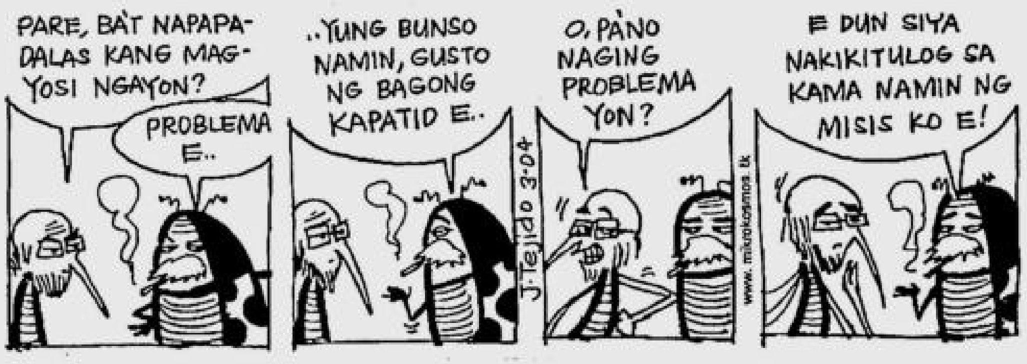
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


CHOMP
HE MUST'VE BITTEN HIS FINGERS WHILE EATING HIS SANDWICH!
WAAAA
...GIVING NEW MEANING TO THE WORD "FINGERFOOD"!! HEH HEH HEH...

MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


PARE, BA'T NAPAPADALAS KANG MAGYOSI NGAYON?
PROBLEMA E..
..'YUNG BUNSO NAMIN, GUSTO NG BAGONG KAPATID E..
O, PA'NO NAGING PROBLEMA YON?
E DUN SIYA NAKIKITULOG SA KAMA NAMIN NG MISIS KO E!
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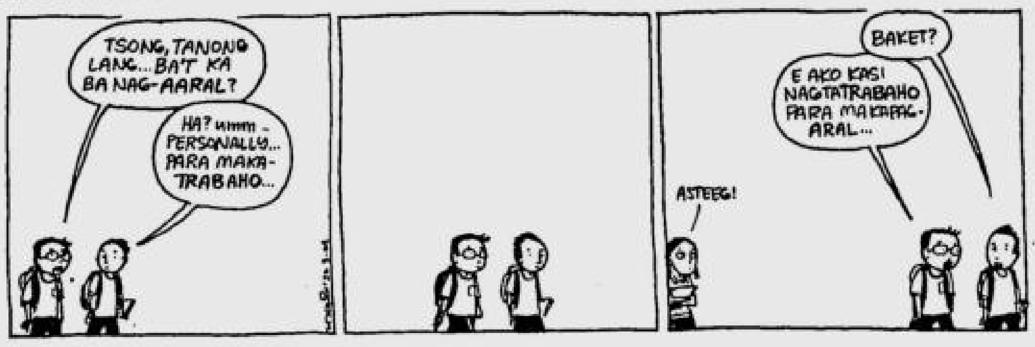
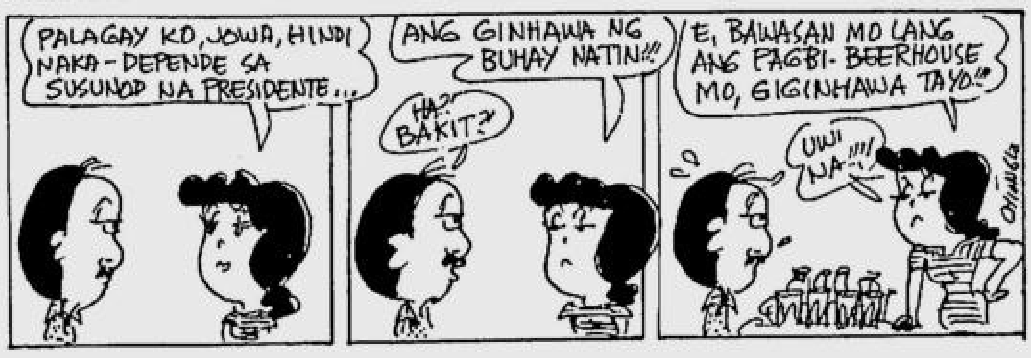
www.mikrokosmos.tk

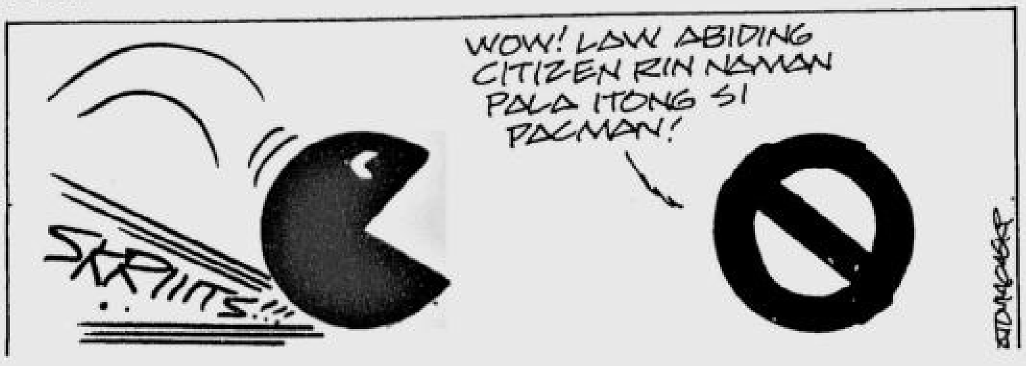
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


TSONG, TANONG LANG... BA'T KA BA NAG-AARAL?
HA? UMMM... PERSONALLY... PARA MAKATRABAHO...
ASTEEG!
BAKET?
E AKO KASI NAGTATRABAHO PARA MAKAPAG-ARAL...

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


PALAGAY KO, JOWA, HINDI NAKA-DEPENDE SA SUSUNOD NA PRESIDENTE...
ANG GINHAWA NG BUHAY NATIN!!!
HA? BAKIT?
E, BAWASAN MO LANG ANG PAGBI-BEERHOUSE MO, GIGINHAWA TAYO!!
UWI NA!!!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


WOW! LAW ABIDING CITIZEN RIN NAMAN PALA ITONG SI PACMAN!
SKRIIITS!!!

Focus on lost art of writing love letters

By Ronald G. Mangubat

WHAT were love and courtship like in the pre-cyberspace and text-messaging era? Aside from the old-fashioned *panunuyo*, with men doing manual labor in order to woo coy females, and singing serenades or *harana*, writing elaborate love letters was also considered an important step in melting Filipino ladies' hearts.

Special ribbon

In the old days, experts say, writing love letters was considered an art, and masters at this form of writing even used special parchment paper, wrote with a quill, sealed the envelope in wax and tied it with a special ribbon—much like what Winona Ryder did in the 1993 movie, "Age of Innocence."

Fifty-one years ago, Kislap magazine held a love letter writing contest, which was participated in by more than 4,000 contestants all over the country.

Glimpses

Those letters, including those written by the two editors, V. Briones and F. Feliciano in 1953, were recently published in book form. Edited by Dr. Isagani Cruz, "Love Stories of the Fifties" (Bookmark Inc., 1990, 143 pp.) is a jewel of a book, offering glimpses into the romantic introspections of people during that time when the country was in a reconstructive mood and healing from the horrors of World War II.

"Many of the letters were copies of treasured letters sent to the contestants by their suitors or lovers," writes Dr. Cruz in his introduction. "In other words, many of the letters were authentic, expressing real feelings of real people towards real objects of love."

RYDER. Wrote elaborately romantic missives in "Age of Innocence."

There were two second prizes (no first prize), and a third prize, while three entries received special mention.

Mushy romance and passion are enmeshed in the featured letters from the salutation (e.g. "Chiquita, my little moon," "Nenita, Pearl of my love," "Chona, my enchanting Belle,") up to the complimentary close (e.g. "Your loving slave," "In abject despair," "a lonely Romeo,"). Each letter told a different story and spoke of the various permutations of romance: loss, thrill, joys, separation, desire, etc.

Lesson

Reading through the letters is a lesson in ornate romantic writing. For example, one of the two second prize winners, submitted by a certain Claudia Buyson-Carrel, is a sad goodbye written by a man who was heartbroken after his girlfriend's decision to obey her parent's wish for her to study in a finishing school abroad.

The writer, who calls himself Mering, expresses his pain and writes the following at the end: "But this heart can never die. Ere long, it will return to dust, and when it does, its thousand fragments will cover the earth in all its splendor to proclaim to the world and to eternity that it lived to love, it learned to love, and that love was you. Goodbye."

Another letter, submitted by Jaime B. Ramirez, speaks of the magical thrill of falling in love: "Yes, I have been in love with you—a love that bathes my world with beauty, sweetness and song. It transforms the simplest things into rarities of delight; it changes time into whispers of divine music. Ah, the ecstasy of my heart when I think of you!"

Taste buds

Reading the book is like eating a rich and delicious piece of chocolate cake. The first bite teases your taste buds immediately and carries you to various levels of pleasure. And then you're drawn, lost in the maze of sweetness and indulgence.

It is sad to realize that the art of love letter writing has been eclipsed by high-tech communication wizardry. "Love letters of the Fifties" takes readers back to the days when love was pure, harder to pursue and eternally nurtured and cherished.

CBS airs 'Jesus' anew

LOS ANGELES—Inspired by the runaway success of Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," the CBS television network said it will bring its 2000 hit miniseries "Jesus" back to life later this month.

Public life

But, rather than replay the entire four-hour production over two nights, as originally broadcast, the network will cut right to the chase by airing only Part Two as a stand-alone TV movie on Sunday, March 28, tracing the public life of Jesus from his Sermon on the Mount to his crucifixion.

The film, first aired in May of 2000, stars Jeremy Sisto in thé title role, with Jacqueline Bisset as Mary, Gary Oldman as the Roman governor Pontius Pilate and Debra Messing as Mary Magdalene. *Reuters*

NEW Knorr® Cubes ... para sa mga lutuing walang kaparis ang sarap!

Sa bagong Knorr Cubes na mas siniksik sa sarap, siguradong magugustuhan ng husto ng buong pamilya ang mga ulam na ihahanda ni Mommy.

Ang bulalo na tinimplahan ng new Knorr Beef Broth Cubes, magiging bulalong-bulalo! Ang tinola na may new Knorr Chicken Broth Cubes, may sabaw na tinolang-tinola! At ang mga iba pang paboritong pagkain ng pamilya, basta may kasamang new Knorr Pork, Fish, Shrimp and Tamarind Broth Cubes ... panalo!

At ngayong bakasyon ng mga bata, ihanda sa kanila ang isang paborito at katakam-takam na merienda ... gamit ang new Knorr Shrimp Broth Cubes ... para sa mas siniksik na sarap ng tunay na hipon.

Loming-Lomi Soup

Ingredients

1	tbsp	cooking oil
3	cloves	garlic, crushed
1	pc	onion, small, sliced
1/4	kg	shrimps, medium, boiled, shelled, sliced
10	pcs	fishballs
4	cups	water
2	pcs	new Knorr Shrimp Broth Cubes
1/2	kg	lomi noodles
1/4	kg	pechay baguio
2	tbsp	cornstarch, dissolved in 3 tbsp water
1	pc	egg, beaten

Procedure

Heat oil in a soup pot. Sauté garlic, onion and shrimp. Add fishballs, water and new Knorr Shrimp Broth Cubes. Add noodles and pechay. Cook until tender. Slowly pour cornstarch mix while stirring soup constantly. Add egg and serve hot.
Makes 5 servings.

Tip

You can also add other vegetables like baguio beans, cabbage and carrots. These will not only add color to the dish, but will also give more nutritional value!

Kaya sa sandaling matikman ni mister at ng iyong mga tsikiting ang malinamnam na Loming-Lomi Soup na tinimplahan ng new Knorr Shrimp Broth Cubes para sa mas siniksik sa sarap ng tunay na hipon, siguradong masaya, enjoy, kagana-gana at napakasarap ang bakasyon nila!

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float

Summer Nami day page G2

Tina tastes Jules & Assunta page H1

A one night stand with Wolfgang page I1

Photography: ROMMEL MARASIGAN
Cover star: NAMI private villa's outdoor jacuzzi, Diniwid Beach, Boracay

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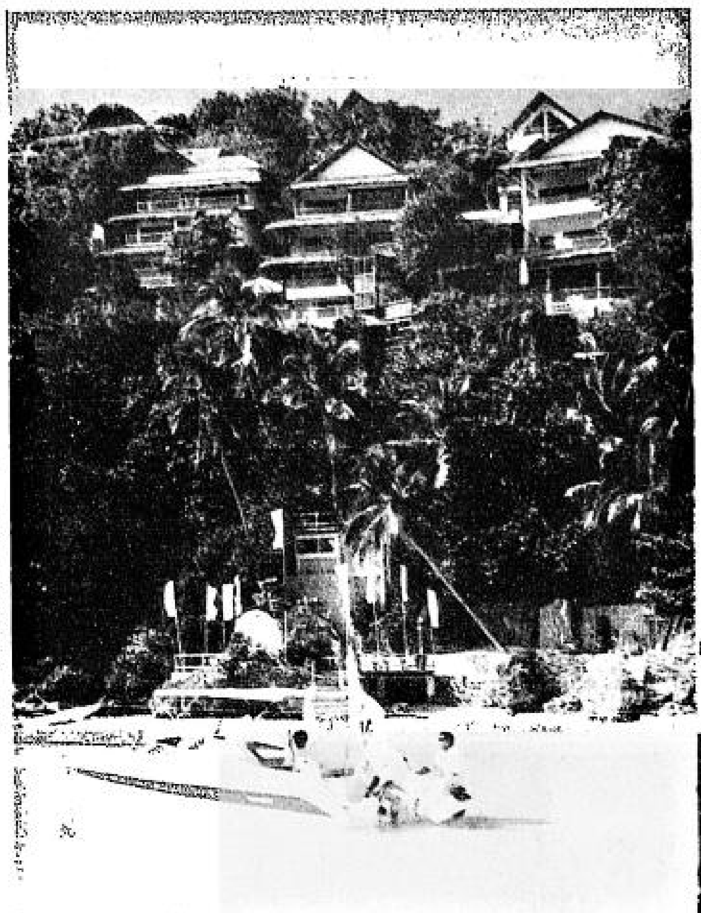
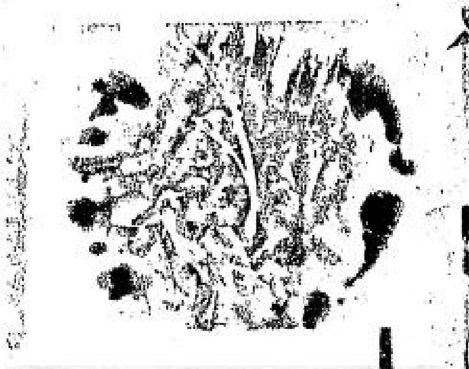
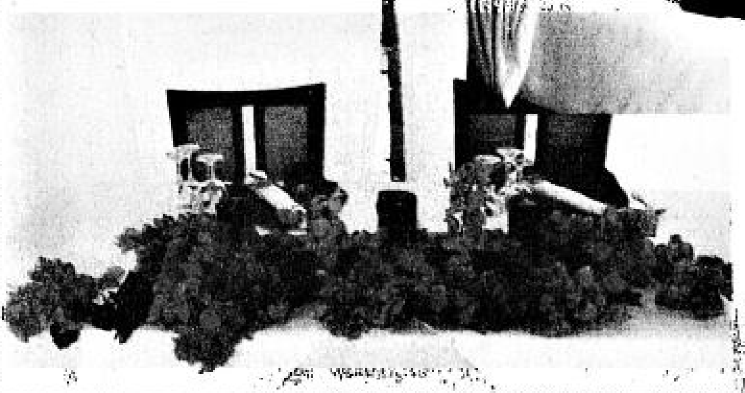
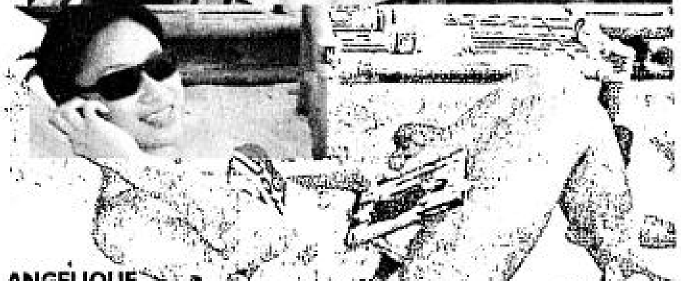
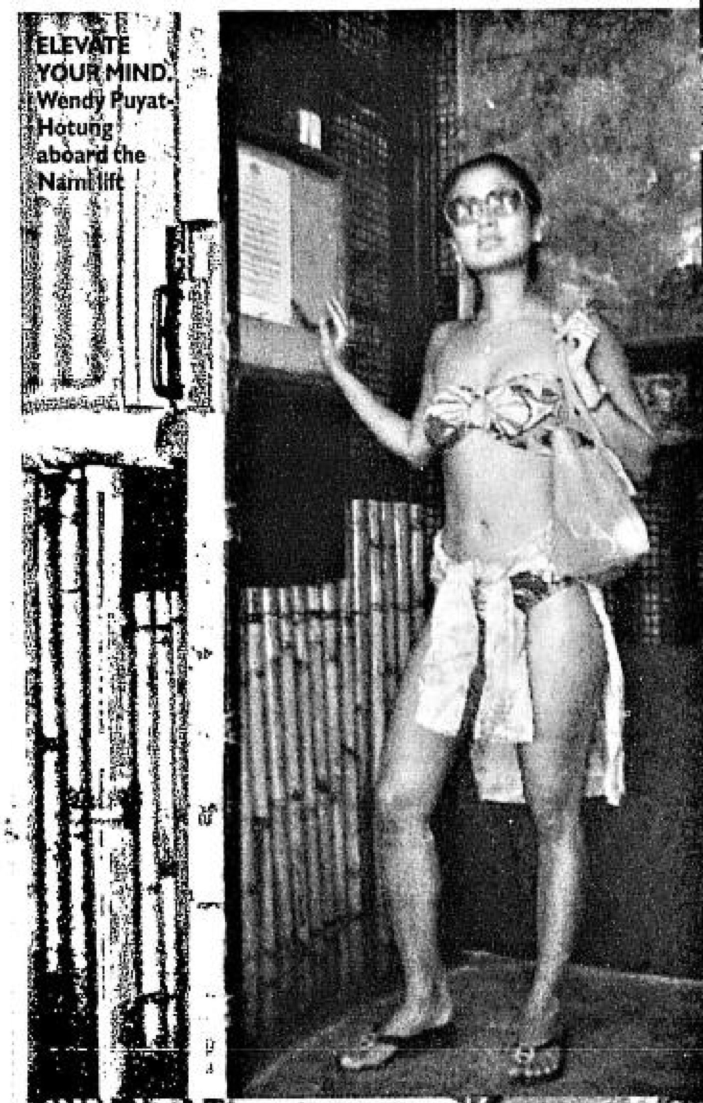








ANGELIQUE Villaraza in Pucci bikini



ELEVATE YOUR MIND. Wendy Puyat-Hotung aboard the Nami lift

Escape to Nami

Tim Yap

START your day with a champagne brunch of yummy, yummy mushroom and goat cheese omelette with caramelized onions and basil. Toast to yourself and your partner (assuming you have one) and make sure you savor every minute at Nami.

The good life starts here.

Nami is the Ilonggo word for nice, beautiful, pleasant or delicious.

Nami is also Japanese for wave. Expect a tidal wave of luxury, as romance and pampering take a front seat with pleasure during your "escape from escape" in Nami, at the famed Diniwid Beach in Boracay.

Sick of the maddening crowds of the party island? Hie off to this secluded part and indulge in the privacy of your own space—for your eyes only. Your Nami private villa affords you an intimate outdoor jacuzzi for you and your partner—bubbles, bubbly et. al. at your disposal.

"Take your own sweet time," it seems to whisper as you inhale the lavender fumes of your bubbly bath.

After all that private time, maybe you feel like chilling with the whole world for savvy sunset cocktails. Call out to Nami's Marlon, and tell him you'd love to head over to the main beach—and off you go on a speed boat. Think Charlie's Angels meets James Bond as you wear your aviators towards whichever destination you wish to go—from Station 1 to 21—it's Paradise 101.

Don't forget to pack your Shu Uemura sun survival kit of Depsea water spray, facial sunblock and skin purifier. The rays are out to embrace your skin with a shade darker than your usual self, so better be prepared for some toasting and tan-talizing.

At the beach, don your most colorful Vilbrequins and flaunt your Puccis. Who cares if you're overdressed? You'll never know what's in store for you. An unforgettable good time out on the town, a beach front rendezvous (wink, wink), perhaps even a marriage proposal.

In Nami, magic just takes over.

In fact, it's been the favorite vacation, proposal and honeymoon spot for this town's chi chi set. From arranged helicopter rides, to petal drops, to butterfly spectaculars, Nami weddings have been increasingly on a lot of couple's wish lists. They're rich in understated elegance and classic enough to transcend the sands of time.

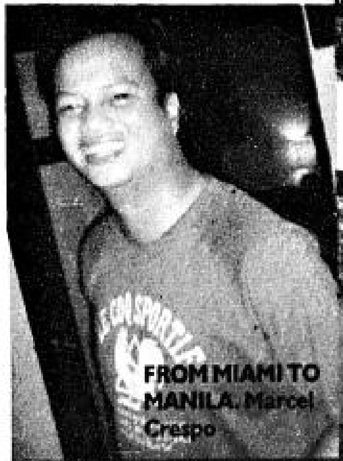
Imagine no more as the creme de la creme of Boracay resorts takes you to a roller coaster ride of emotions, away from it all. Relax with a petal rose bath at your outdoor jacuzzi, have a private beach front dinner just for you and your mate, have a massage anytime, anywhere on soulful meditation beds.

Ahh, life just can't get any better.

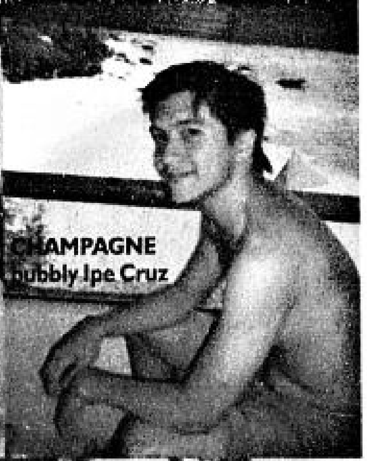
Party, party, party. Sun, sun, sun. Fun, fun, fun. At Nami, paradise lost is paradise found.

Wanna see for yourself what I mean? Check out this spread or log on to www.namiboracay.com or call Makati office: 8121689/8121484; Boracay: (036)2886753

PAGEANT. Jeni Epperson, Freida Dario, Celine Lopez, Angelique Villaraza and Tina Tinio



FROM MIAMI TO MANILA. Marcel Crespo



CHAMPAGNE bubbly Ipe Cruz

BEACH TRIP. JM Rodriguez

PEPPER Teehankee, Tim Yap Jenn[illegible]pperson and Ipe Cruz

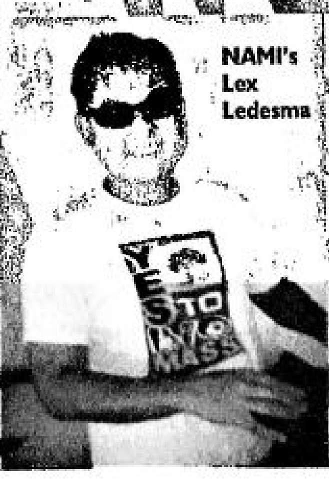
JENNI Epperson and Jay Sarmiento

DJ Montano and Freida Dario

WENDY Puyat-Hotung and husband Tony

DOG in photos is Friday (of Hey Jude), named after Freida

SHU SHOT. Tina Tinio



NAMI's Lex Ledesma

JOEL Ong

The other F word

You're a fashionista. I'm a fashionista. Your yaya is a fashionista. Pardon the po-pomo angst, but do you even know what a fashionista is?

Age against the machine

Gino de la Paz

I REALLY hate the way the word "fashionista" is being thrown around these days. I was making polite, though passive-aggressive, conversation with the TV when a certain contest on a local music channel sort of caught my attention. (Hint: The network's three-letter name rhymes with "chicks.") Since I had been busy rounding up a few pickled ideas for a possible article, I decided to take five, chillax, and watch.

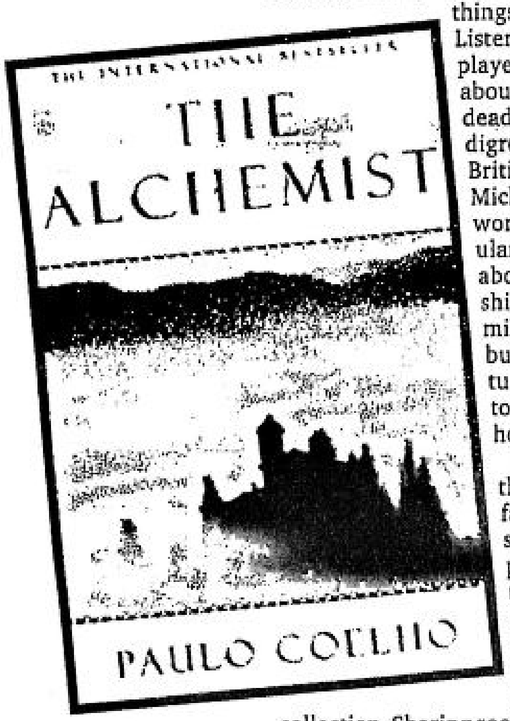
"Be a VJ for a day!" hollered the off-cam voice. The game plan was simple: Using your camera phone, take a snapshot of yourself or a friend and send it to a number with the necessary contact details. A supposedly worthy wannabe will be picked to ham it up in front of a blue screen for 15 Warholian minutes.

That Friday's top dog was a university dude with spiky, faux brown hair and admittedly TV-inappropriate bone structure. His cohorts—the ones I suspect landed him this gig in the first place—heaped a tremendous amount of praise on their instant VJ pal. One soundbite, however, stood out and tripped my alarm. When pressed to give a reason why his amigo would make the perfect VJ for a day, one guy said: "My best friend is a fashionista!" Good God, the delivery was deadpan.

Since I couldn't shake those morons out of their shallow reverie, I did what any self-respecting urban couch potato would do and had an extremely lengthy and frighteningly hearty belly laugh. I'm a huge fan of reality programming and the occasional underdog, but seriously now. You're a fashionista. I'm a fashionista. Your yaya is a fashionista. Pardon the po-pomo angst, but do you even know what a fashionista is?

Google search

Researchers at the Oxford English Dictionary trace this now-abused buzzword back to 1993, when "fashionista" first appeared in a book by Stephen Fried called *Thing of Beauty: the Tragedy of Supermodel Gia*. (For a reputed "supermodel," this Gia never achieved the success of fashion fossils like Naomi, Linda, Cindy, and Christy. To make things even cheesier, B-Lister Angelina Jolie played Gia in a movie about her life! Being dead surely sucks, but I digress.) According to British journalist Michael Quinion, this F word only became popular starting 1998, about the same time shit surrounding the millennium, the Y2K bug, and the impromptu end of civilization took the free world hostage.



BLECH. Anyone up for "Chicken Soup for the Copycat Soul?"

Formed by affixing the Spanish -ista, fashionista is a gently sarcastic term for a person who is an enthusiast for fashion and can refer to those who design, make, model and publicize a clothing collection. Sharing roots with Spanish political terms like Sandanista and Peronista, fashionista is also derogatory and has not yet entirely lost its disparaging associations with triviality.

But despite the shady pedigree, fashionista has somehow meandered into more upbeat pastures. Depending on its context, this worldwide word can actually be treated as a compliment. This is presumably why most individuals use fashionista recklessly, which in turn, requires the bearer of the accolade to back it all up with tons of crucial fashion acumen. With this in mind, I sincerely doubt our aforementioned VJ for a day has a Martine Sitbon shirt hanging in his closet, wears jeans by I.C.R. Vs. Deth Killers of Bushwick, or knows that the capsule designer collection in the TopShop store on Oxford St. is called Void. Then again, what do I know?

HOT, HOT, HOT OIL. Kids, this is your brain on too much fashion. Meet Lauren Ezersky and child

Tough concept

It's tough to talk about something so vague and subjective without inadvertently contradicting yourself. And it's even more of a challenge to sit on your hands and not beat your own drum at some point. Given that, I should 'fess up: I used to be a vacuous clotheshorse with a hardcore addiction to designer labels.

In my recent past, I had no qualms about spending a hideous sum of money on a Miu Miu garrison belt, crossing the Colombia-Venezuela border for a pair of $400 Gucci trousers in Caracas, or hoarding most of the Alessandro Dell'Acqua rack at the men's basement in Harvey Nicks.

I also took immense pride in scoring a sweet pair of Dirk Bikkembergs trainers in Tel Aviv, of all places, as well as unearthing items from high and low, long before they attained anthemic must-have status. All of this came to an end, of course, when I started living on my own and paid for more essential things like rent, groceries, and well, plane tickets. As my dreams of being immortalized in a Ruben Tolédo illustration (wearing my new G-Star jeans and scowling like an overpaid underage cast member of "The O.C.") flatlined, it got me thinking about the silliness of it all. I mean, I still wore my Ike & Dean pinstripes on the bus, but I wasn't too precious about it anymore. I became more "street" which was apparently "the new smart."

STEPHEN KING
Carrie

NOT BRADSHAW, THANK GOD. This Carrie is better than "Sex and the Frickin' City"

The friends who knew me best—most of whom were in the publishing biz, by the way—said they were bowled over by my eye for really awesome stuff, and my ability to look like a million bucks, even in the most extreme locations. It was at this precise moment when I was called a fashionista, and I wasn't too thrilled about it. On the one hand, the F label was exactly like Proenza Schouler or Andre Léon Talley—too girly and pretentious, so I didn't want to have anything to do with it. On the other hand, the tag didn't come from me, so I was gracious about it and took it with a grain of kosher salt.

After all, you don't label yourself because doing so will make you cease to become that thing. When you're beautiful, you don't call yourself beautiful, right? I guess the same thing goes with being hot, gorgeous, or sexy. Ditto, being a model, icon, or fashionista. (I noticed that persons who opt to shamelessly promote themselves as such, or luxuriate in said labels, were dweebs or dweebettes during a significant chunk of their lives. More than anything, it's a way to cover up an unhip past.)

Bring it back

The DIY democracy surrounding style is a two-way catwalk. In certain circles, fashionista has become the same as fashion victim, making the term cheap, crass and definitely insulting. So there are those who prefer to live opposite the epicenter of what's cool and hip, unintentionally making themselves cool and hip in an anti-fashion kind of way.

UK native Bay Garnett and her other outsider-rebel associates from Cheap Date, an anti-fashionista zine, practice what they have dubbed as "shopdropping." They plant ugly clothes on the racks of swishy stores like Helmut Lang and take photos for forensic purposes, all in the name of lowlife style and thrifting. It's a lot more intellectual and exhilarating than the common practice of shoplifting.

Fashion is an art as well as a lifestyle that presupposes one's knowledge and expertise about that art. Having crept into the pop culture realm occupied by movies, TV, books and music, fashion—what's fashionable or who's a genuine fashionista—now spawns its own discussion boards. I blame *Sex and the City* for breeding a whole generation of Carrie Bradshaw clones who think true style can be found in a makeover.

DREAMWORKERS. Ace illustrators Ruben and Isabel Toledo

If mediocre people like that can be considered stylish, then our standards must be sinking lower and lower. Again, it's like calling yourself an avid bookworm but all you've read is Paolo Coelho's *The Alchemist*. (Yes, that book blows—a total Saint-Exupery rip-off—and it's about time someone said it!) What's up with that?

But in the face of other burning issues like terrorism, the environment, and daily survival, why should we bunch our collective panties over something as mundane as someone else's fashion emergencies? While we're on it, why have labels become so important anyway? To de-clutter our overstyled psyches, I think it's time to bring back the essence of that other F word, regardless of its negative or positive connotations. When it comes to spotting the next fashionista, it would be best to leave the matter alone. And if things really can't be helped, we should then, at least, leave it to the experts.

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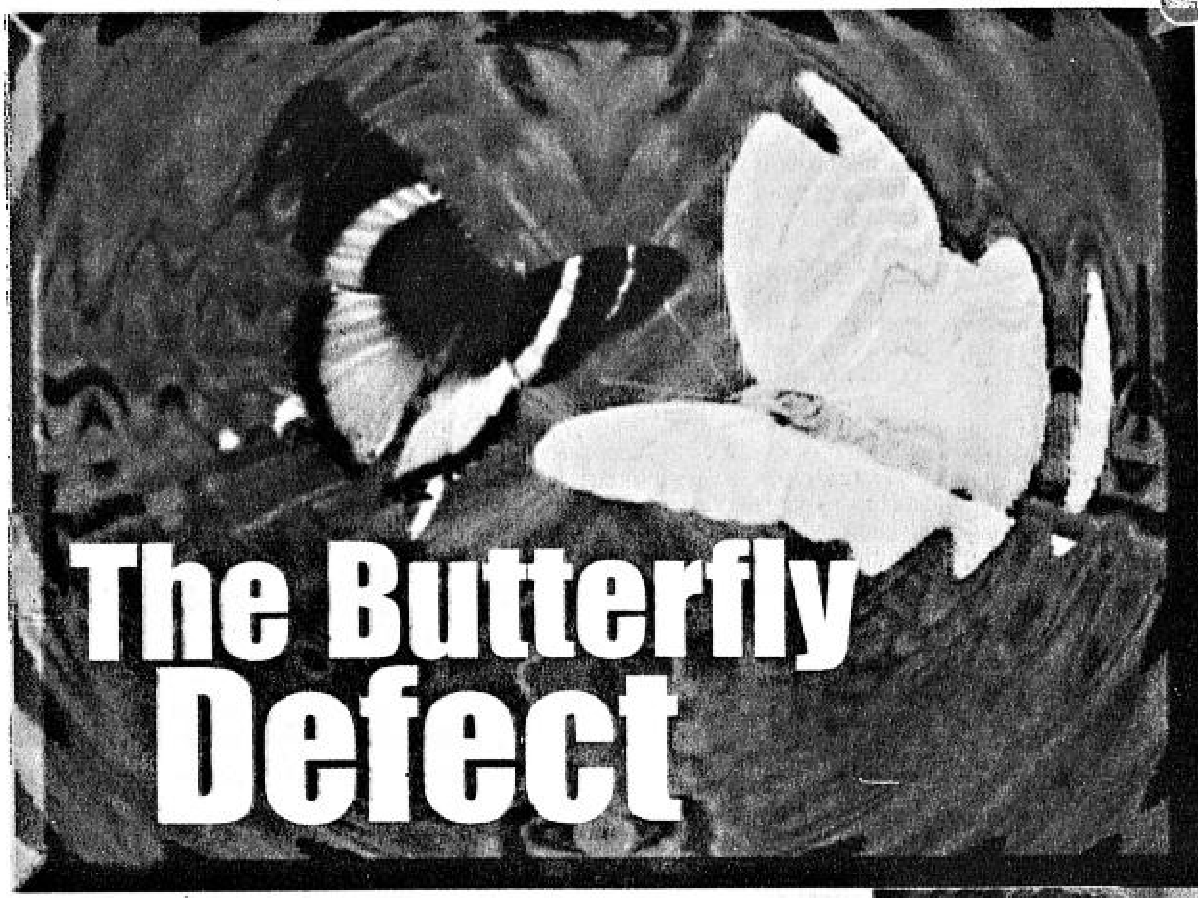
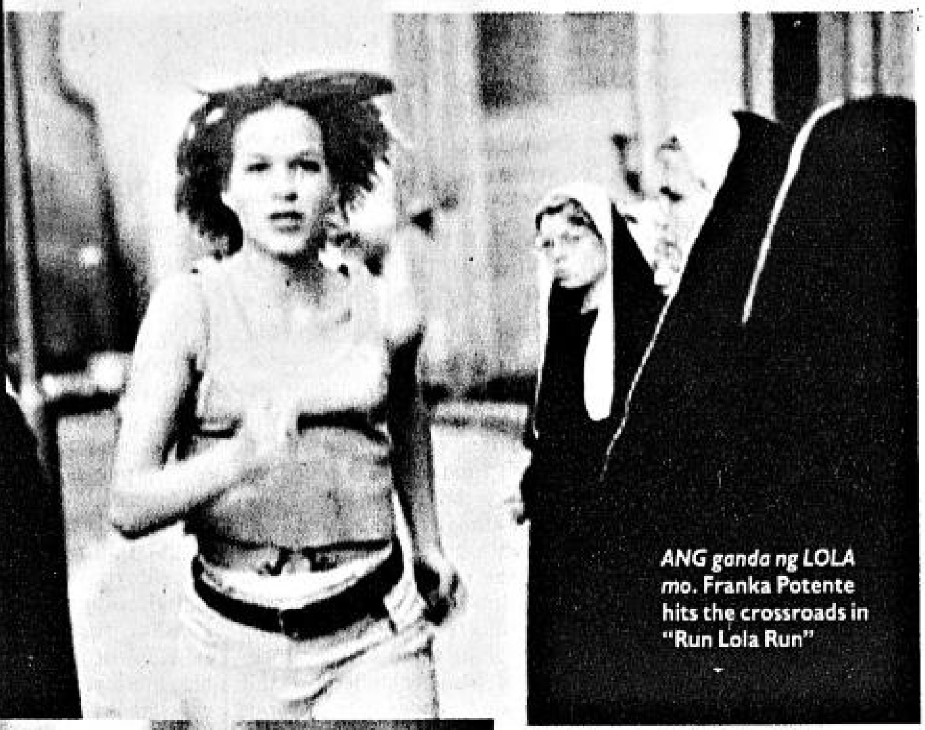


The Butterfly Defect

Of chaos, crossroads, and how I could have been married to Johnny Depp



ANG ganda ng LOLA mo. Franka Potente hits the crossroads in "Run Lola Run"

OUT THE WINDOW

Tals Diaz

MAYBE it was the full moon, maybe it was the flight pattern of a butterfly somewhere over Basilan, maybe it was the first searing swell of an endless summer.

Whatever it was, there was just something about last weekend that mysteriously caused old, long-absent friends to suddenly appear and make appointments to see me at my personal satellite offices, aka, the coffee shops around the city. My usually light and laid-back weekend schedule was suddenly booked with meetings at different cafés morning, noon and night, so much so, my quivering hands and heart palpitations made me think about changing my choice of conference space.

More than a simple desire to reconnect and catch up on life, these old friends from different circles all wanted something from me. (And it wasn't money, I can tell you that much, for my sudden fixation on the latest collection of Havaianas rubber flipflops had seriously depleted my bank account.)

These old friends were all seeking my advice on how to deal with that dreaded situation which I believe every human being with half a soul goes through: the crossroads (insert *Twilight Zone* soundtrack here).

I had no idea that I was such a respected guru for the bewildered, twenty-to-thirtysomething set who have no idea what to do with their lives. I, for one, shudder at giving concrete advice on how others should lead their lives, much less at making life-altering decisions for someone else, especially since I have enough trouble choosing what brand of toothpaste to buy.

Yet, if there is one art that I am proud to have learned in all my years of existence on this earth, it is the ancient art of listening. The subject matters were the usual suspects: the travails of failed relationships, ennui with dead-end jobs, the fears of commitment and the consuming desire to escape the country. You can imagine that by Sunday night, I was in dire need of Prozac.

Chaos and crossroads

Ahhh...the crossroads. In every decent person's struggle to better himself, there's always a point when he hits a personal zero hour. Some call it a quarter-life crisis, modern stoned philosophers term it existential ennui, while I brazenly theorize it as a call for chaos.

Chaos is generally believed to be a state of turmoil and anarchy. In scientific terms, chaos, with reference to the Chaos Theory, is an illusory lack of order in a system that in fact obeys particular laws or rules. Even the most complex systems rely upon an underlying order, such that very simple or small events can cause extremely complex outcomes. In normal, understandable English, this simply means that even the smallest change can drastically alter long-term behavior.

The chaos theory is more visually relayed by its most famous interpretative question: "does the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas?" Thus, giving us a clue behind the title of Ashton Kutcher's upcoming film, *The Butterfly Effect*, which gives a primer on the lack of predictability in life's events.

Ray Bradbury once wrote a brilliant short story called *The Sound of Thunder*, which was eventually made into a *Twilight Zone* episode that explored this theory.

In the story, time travelers set the clock back to the Jurassic age to go a-hunting for some T-Rexes. When one hunter strayed along the marked path and accidentally stepped on a tiny little butterfly, it set off a series of events that drastically changed the outcome of the future that they returned to.

The butterfly effect was likewise illustrated by the movie *Sliding Doors*, which showed two parallel, conflicting stories affected by Gwyneth Paltrow's simple A or B action, that is, her entry and non-entry into a homeward-bound train. In the story where she makes it through the subway doors in time, she catches her boyfriend in bed with another woman, and that set off a chain of events, the most important of which was updating her hairdo to an uber-chic, modern bob. Indie film enthusiasts would likewise cite the German film, *Run Lola Run*, to illustrate how the smallest actions, like greeting nuns on the street, could spell the difference between becoming filthy rich or becoming a filthy prisoner cleaning toilets in jail.

"NO, this isn't Kelso!" Ashton Kutcher in "The Butterfly Effect"

Maybe baby

So what does all this have to do with my advice-seeking, coffee-fixated, psych patients-in-need?

The fact that every choice, every decision we make in life equates to an infinite number of possibilities that we could be living out today can be quite perplexing. This multiplicity of outcomes loomed over the heads of my old friends who pondered away on several "maybes." Maybe if I didn't get married early, I'd be living it up as a globe-trotting playboy. Maybe if I took up tree surgery instead of computer science, I wouldn't be slaving away in an office cubicle. Maybe if I didn't succumb to peer pressure and accepted that first cigarette offered to me 10 years ago, I wouldn't be smoking two packs a day. I, myself, thought that maybe if I chose Coke over Pepsi during the Pepsi Challenge many years ago, I'd be married to Johnny Depp.

My four hour-long sessions with old friends over the weekend made me wonder: maybe it isn't order and stability that people want in their lives, but a good dose of unpredictability thrown in now and then. It is but natural for people, especially the ones who've got the basics of food, shelter and cable TV down pat, to feel such a need to break free from the ant farm existence.

My lifelong subscription to the Chaos Theory is precisely why I can never answer that favorite, winner-take-all question, "how do you see yourself 10 years from now?" Heck should I know? Though my present preoccupations are geared towards momentous future occasions like being squashed among soccer fans at the World Cup in 2006 and meeting the Dalai Lama, perhaps the flap of fried chicken wings in the nearest KFC branch might mean Eddie Gil's rise to the presidency, thus assuring a bizarre new world order.

Details

In the greater scheme of things, I ponder on the Chaos Theory even when I'm just observing the state of our nation, which has been described far too many times as chaotic. It's the details I examine. The sweat-soaked face of a kid in tattered clothes selling sampaguita at noon; a bright red bag of Chippy among the flotsam and jetsam of garbage floating on a once pristine river; the bone-thin, dark legs of a homeless man in stark contrast to a sunflower-yellow poster of a presidential candidate. What one action, what prime move set off the chain of events to create this present reality? I can only imagine that it was the smallest act—a pedestrian throwing a candy wrapper on the street; a politician who decided that one little bribe won't hurt anybody; an 18-year old who thought that his single vote won't make a difference.

The details of life—perhaps herein lies the secret to better living. When we know that everything miniscule to grand is connected, then we will realize the importance of everything we do. It's a scary thought, knowing this causality that threads all life; how even just one person can have a hand at everyone else's fate.

Perhaps people are too worried about the big picture of the future, and too fixated with the past, that they tend to forget that it's the colors they paint today that compose the mural. We may regret all we want and pine away over ifs and maybes, but since we can't travel back in time to drastically change the now, I think what's best is to focus on the simple things we can do at the present. Maybe if we pay more attention or become more aware about what we're doing, what people say and don't say, or what's showing at CNN, we'd actually have a better perspective on life's myriad options.

In the end, chaos is all about unpredictability. Though people generally believe that our life's paths have been predetermined by traditional society in an ongoing cycle of birth and death, I still revel in the beauty of being unable to predict how my own life will turn out -- and yet having a direct hand at steering it towards a favored general direction. In that sense, every second is a crossroad. I am fervently hoping that whatever I choose to do today would mean that in the end, I'd be fluttering my wings somewhere along a nice Pacific coastline.

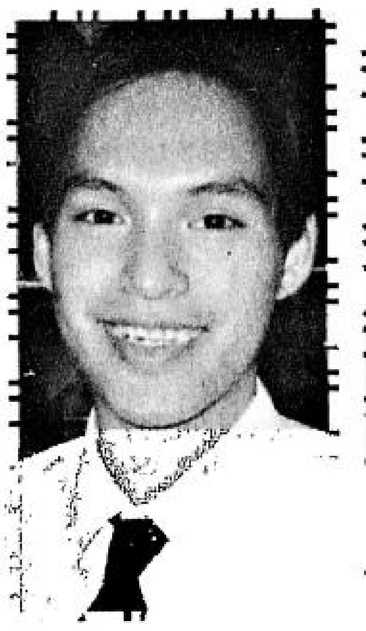
(Choose life, choose your future, choose to e-mail me if you want at: inca_orange@yahoo.com)

Superfriends!

Text and photos by Tina Pamintuan

Hi, my name is EJ Dagdayan.
The best thing about being single is being free.
Best kiss: Hershey's
Worst kiss: Kissing the toilet after too much tequila
Please send kisses to: Kiss the picture in the article. That's enough for me to feel special.

Hi, my name is Evelyn Bebanco.
The best thing about being single is being free.
The worst thing is being alone: No gifts, roses, etc. on special occasions.
Best kiss: Present boyfriend
Worst kiss: With my former boyfriend because he always forces me.
Please send kisses to: blank1271980@yahoo.com



Hi, my name is Jey Dionio.
The best thing about being single is you can go out with anyone and have more sex.
The worst thing is less sex.
Best kiss: Recent date.
Worst kiss: This girl that I dated. She had bad breath.
Please send kisses to: hoofing_banana@yahoo.com

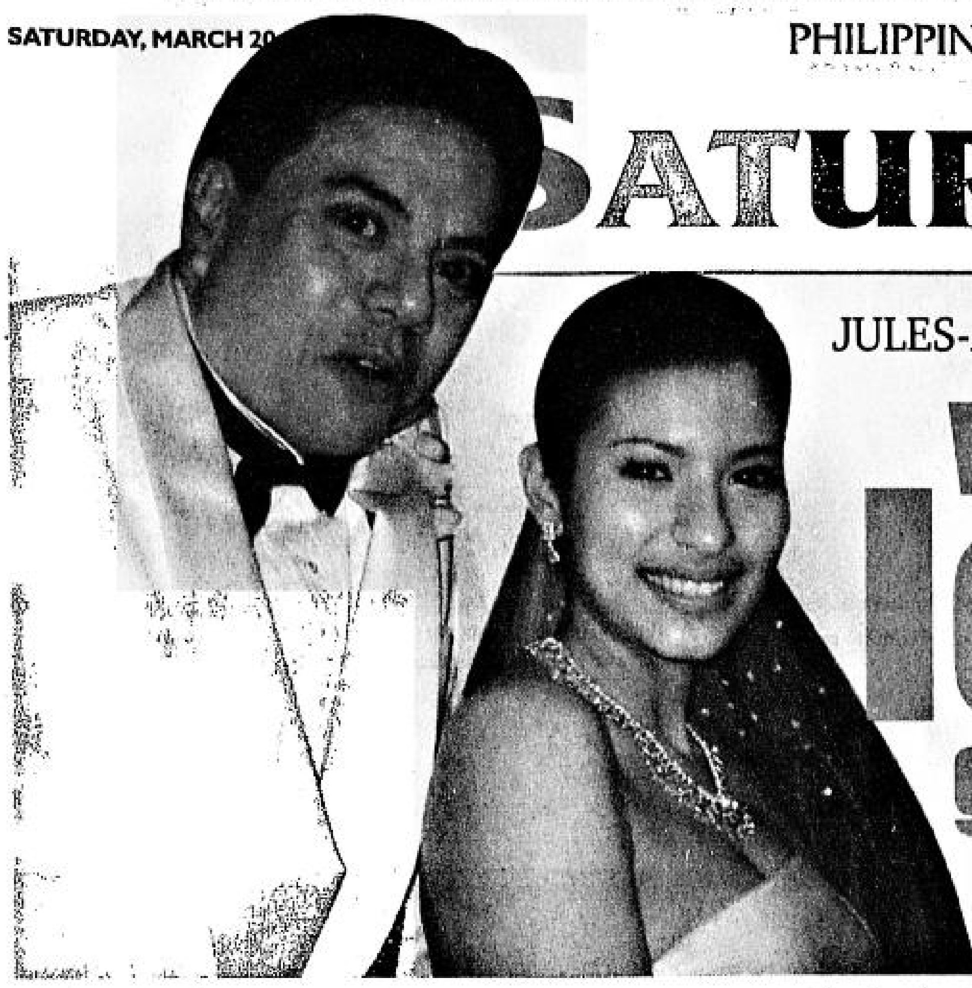
Hi, my name is Porsche.
The best thing about being single is I have no worries!!!
The worst thing is it's sooooo frustrating when you see a couple.
Best and worst kiss: Um, sorry. My mom reads INQUIRER everyday! Don't want to get busted.
Please send kisses to: portiavcf@yahoo.com

Hi, my name is Jaja
The best thing about being single is being able to do whatever you want. You don't have to ask permission from someone for you to stay out late.
Best kiss: Kiss by the beach
Worst kiss: First kiss, I didn't know what to do.
Please send kisses to: janang@425yahoo.com

Hi, my name is Christian.
The best thing about being single is being able to do what you want.
The worst thing is nothing.
Best kiss: French kiss
Worst kiss: Nothing
Please send kisses to anyone.

7. Hi, my name is Atit.
The best thing about being single is having your own time.
The worst thing is loneliness.
The best and worst kiss: Private

SATURDAY Super



JULES-ASSUNTA WEDDING:

What's love got to do with it?

TINA TASTES

by Tina Pamintuan

YES, another wedding.

Another high profile, overpublicized, hyped-up, paparazzi-plagued, frenzied event: The wedding of Jules Ledesma and Assunta de Rossi on March 14.

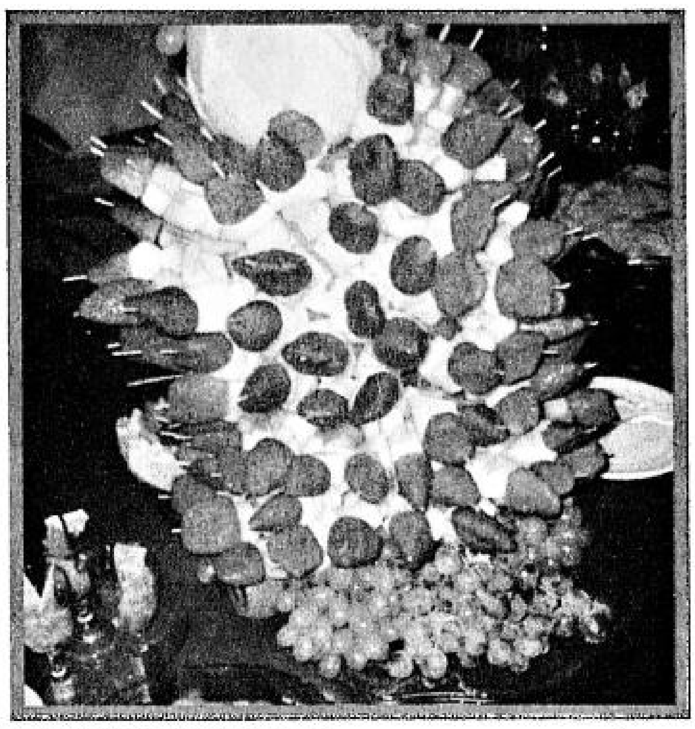
Attending a reception for a thousand people in an enclosed hotel ballroom can turn even a hopeless romantic into a cynic. Imagine the cameras, the bright lights, the actors and actresses in thick makeup and color-coordinated outfits, the politicians schmoozing for votes, and lest we forget, the way too many *ninongs* and *ninangs* in the entourage.

Now that's entertainment. I was ready to be amused and to take part in the circus. And so I thought, let the show begin.

Soldiered burgundy-colored candles welcomed guests to the Rizal Ballroom of the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati. The string ensemble filled the air like traces of a lingering fragrant scent. The voices of Nolyn and Lisa Cabahug, tenor and soprano respectively—his power and her intense emotional cry—together blended into one solemn emotion.

Orange was the chosen motif of the gowns and bouquets. Holland roses and tulips, sparrot and French tulips, plus a variety of flowers like amaryllis, daffodils, forsythia and cherry blossoms in shades of burnt and deep orange, lipstick red, deep red, rust, salmon, yellow and apple green filled the room with their colors and scents. A total of 20,000 stems—flown in from Ger-

WHAT'S/ H2



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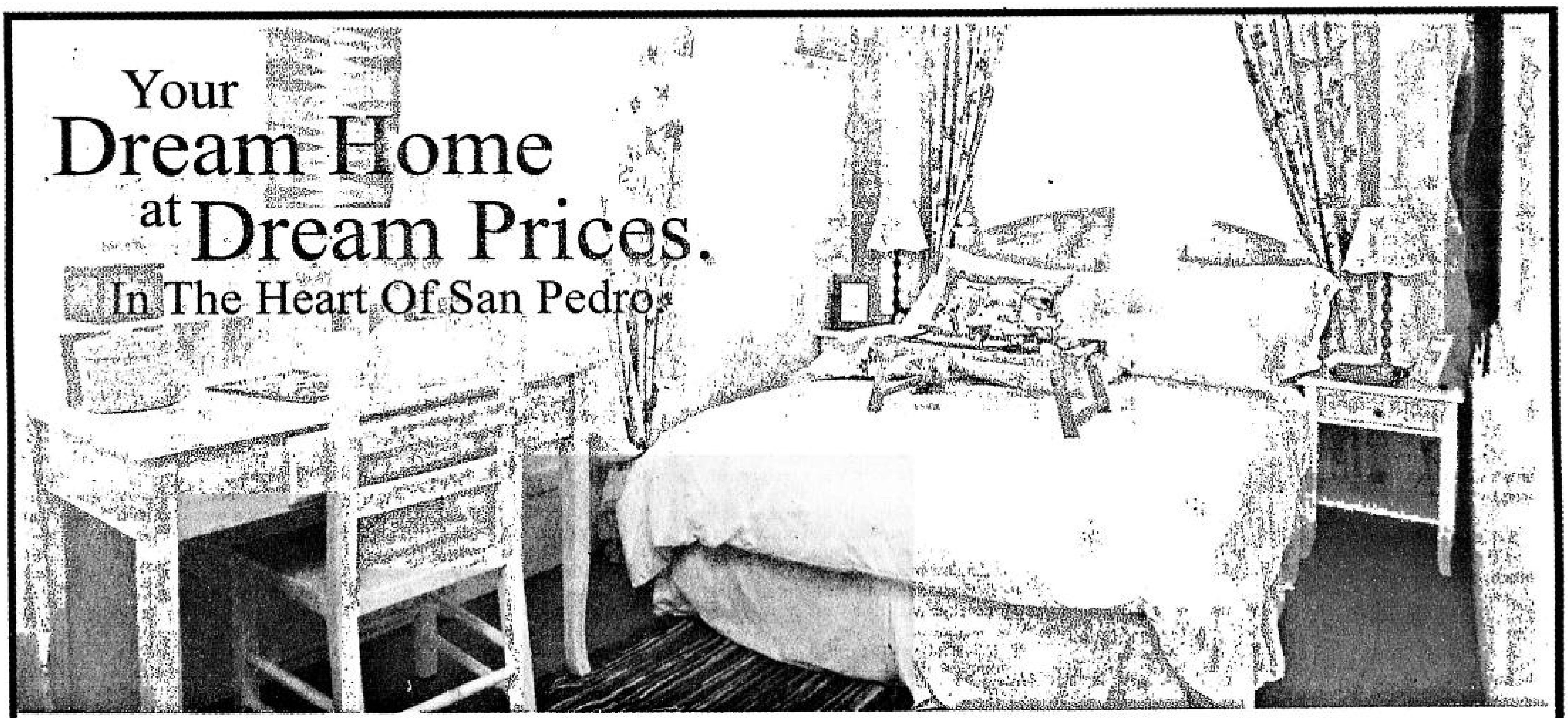

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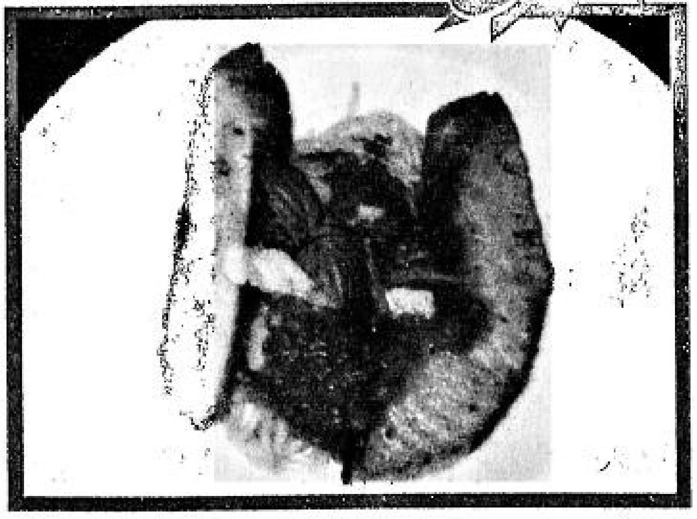
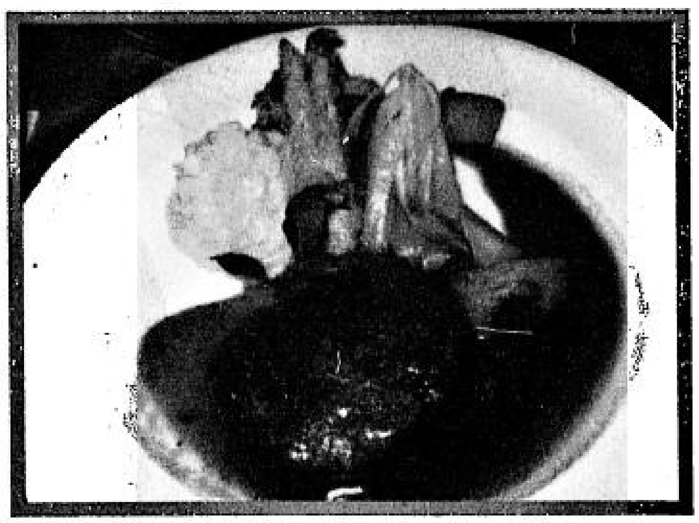


GRILLED salmon steak with butter spaghetti and tomato pesto sauce



GRILLED US tenderloin with garlic mash root vegetables, asparagus spears and black truffle sauce

What's love got to do with it?

From page H1

many and Holland—were used. This doesn't include 2,500 stems of red roses which were made into a red floral chandelier which took five hours to create.

Love has no borders

There were five courses for the sit-down dinner, not including the dessert buffet. The staff of Shangri-La seemed a bit unorganized though. Such a shame, because everything else was so crisp and elegant. Had the waiters been more efficient with serving, moving about the room and cleaning up, everything would have been perfect.

KRIST Bansuelo, bride's makeup artist and my seatmate

It has everything to do with it. The man loves the woman. You could see, hear, smell, taste and feel it

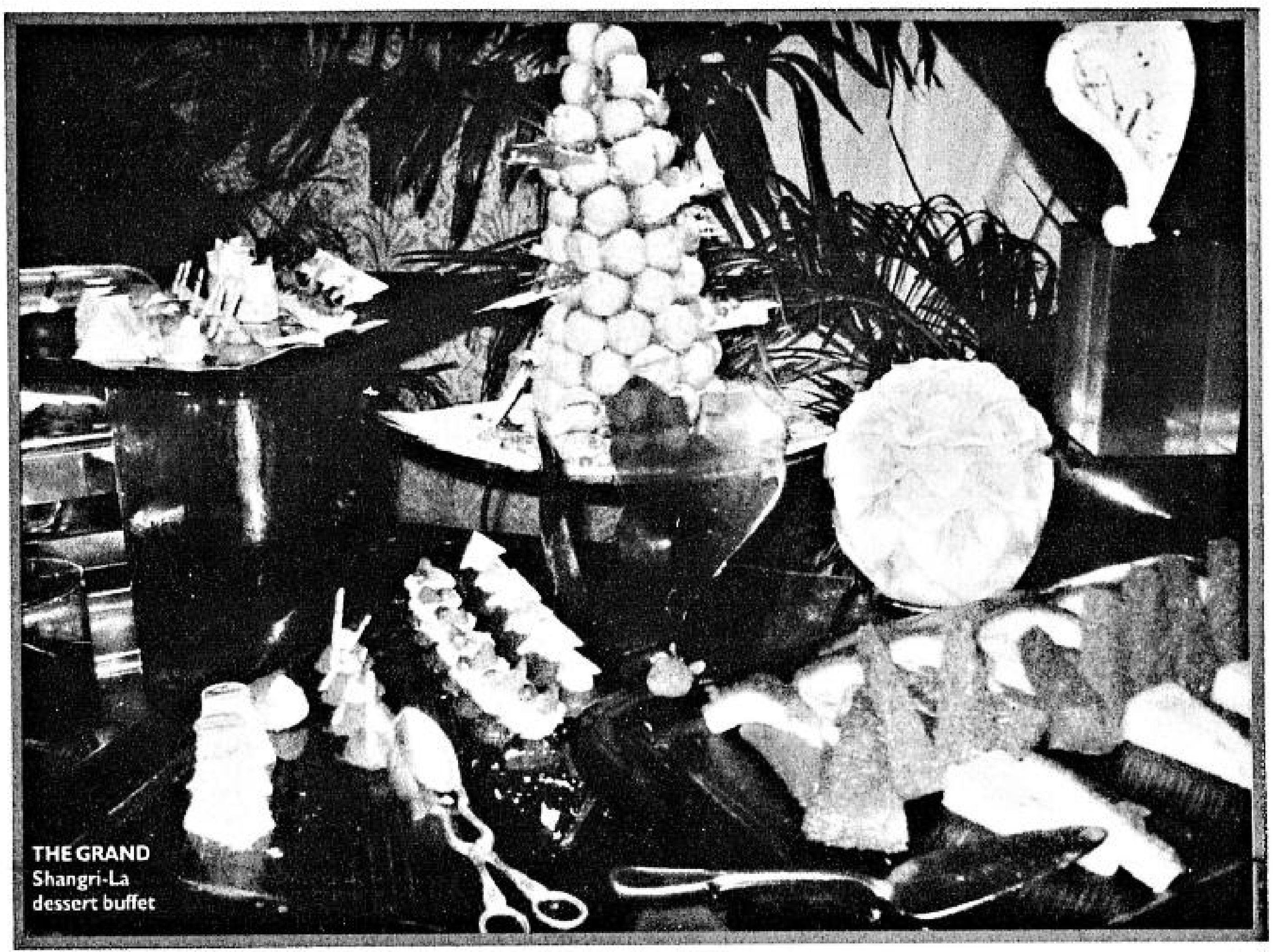
I was a bit disappointed with the salad—it came with hardly any dressing. But less is infinitely better than more. I wouldn't know how to deal with soggy greens. So I asked for a bit more dressing and received it promptly.

A word about the wine. The Montes Alpha Sauvignon Blanc was served chilled and matched the meal perfectly. I absolutely recommend it with any meal. It has a Chardonnay version which has a hint of sweetness most red wine lovers would enjoy.

I started with pumpkin soup and tangy, sharp-tasting shrimp on garlic butter-herbed toasted bread that I couldn't get enough of. The dish was a meal in itself.

Then they served a generous piece of grilled pink salmon, cooked thoroughly and marinated to complement the creamy, buttery noodles in tomato pesto sauce.

The dalandan sherbet saved my life. I could have had four of them. It was smooth, perfectly sweetened and citrusy-sour. It was cool, pleasing and it cleansed my palate for the next dish.



THE GRAND Shangri-La dessert buffet

It's difficult to get meat cooked the right way for such a large number of guests, but I was very impressed with how succulently pink and soft the tenderloin was. I finished the entire piece. It was good enough on its own. The sidings and sauce could have used some help though.

The dessert was the main attraction at this party. There was a mini-ceremony before the presentation of the dessert menu. There were local sweets—ube halaya, leche flan, mini puto, bibingka, cassava and fruit jello. There were also assorted French pastries, Black Forest cake and fresh tropical fruits. There were "action stations," where guests created their own dessert like custom-made crepes topped with their favorite fruits and sauces.

The after-party held just below the venue at another ballroom also offered entertainment by Mulatto and DJ Elian who played hip hop and house music.

It's difficult to pinpoint the highlight of the event because every detail was presented as such—a highlight.

The first that comes to mind is the chocolate fondue buffet. It's a kid's dream come true and deliciously sinful for adults. We had to choose from hot bowls of dark, bitter, white and semi-sweet, creamy luscious, melted chocolate. There were tidbits of all kinds of fruits. Melon, kiwi, banana, mango—they had it all!

There were also marshmallows and chiffon squares in wooden barbecue sticks so you can make your own fruit kebab to dip in the sauce you desire. My favorite was the oversized strawberries. They were bigger than life—in size and in taste, especially when dipped in dark chocolate and matched with a chilled glass of cold bubbly Moet and Chandon.

Perfect!

Why Assunta loves Jules

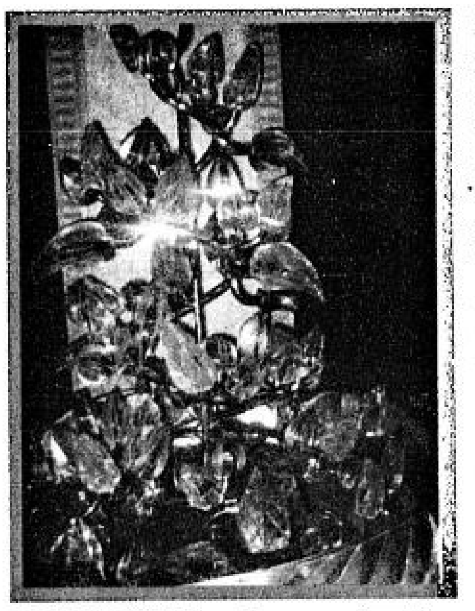
"Jules is honest, sweet, faithful, intelligent, caring, thoughtful, God-fearing and hard-working."

Love has everything to do with it

That the wedding was grand is an understatement. Yet, it was delicately done so it wasn't overpowering. Even the couple's presence was subdued. Jules and Assunta did not table-hop to have their photos taken with guests. They were so into each other and content to just be together.

Cameras were not allowed except for the ABS-CBN crew and a few press photographers who took snapshots at an allotted time and only after dinner. This gave the guests more privacy.

I arrived late so I had my first course as others were finishing up. At this point, there was an ABS-CBN cameraman I did not appreciate. Three courses down my tummy, I realized he was filming me eat! That was just rude. And uncalled for. I just hope it's not going to be shown on TV because if I looked anywhere near funny, I'm not going to be too happy.



CUSTOM-MADE glass champagne fountain

That aside and in summary, it was a fairly intimate reception, considering the couple's popularity and the number of guests.

We are definitely a country that loves weddings. Problem is, we tend to do things in a big way. We like to exaggerate. We end up inviting everybody, it has become a Filipino tradition. It's a good thing that we want to share a special occasion with so many extended friends and relatives. But it's also sad because we could end up missing the point of why we came to the wedding in the first place—to be a part of and to celebrate the union of two people.

Let me mention the little things that made this wedding grand: Good taste, solemnity of the music, beautiful colors, soft and subtle scents and romance in the chocolate.

This is what really matters. What a wedding is all about—love.

In all aspects, the wedding was mind-blowing. Doubtful and cynical, I underestimated love's magic. At the end of the evening, it wasn't even about Jules and Assunta. They were simply a couple in love. By all means, the man loves the woman. It's a love you could see, hear, smell, taste and feel.

Hopefully, it would fill a lifetime.

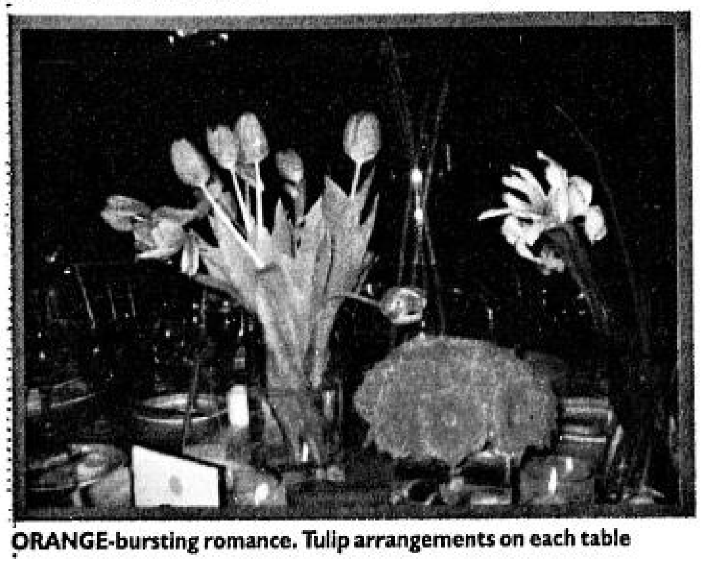
What: JULES AND ASSUNTA NUPTIALS
Where: Reception at The Shangri-La Hotel Makati, Rizal Ballroom
When: March 14, 2004
How much: Your guess is as good as mine
Contact: Wedding coordinator Gigi Bautista, 750-0314
Flowers and Décor: Robert Blancaflor

Questions, comments and suggestions: tina_tastes@yahoo.com

BEAUTY runs in the family. Assunta's sisters Isabel, 11, and Maggie, 14

STILL a beauty queen by all means, Mrs. Charlene Gonzales-Mulach, gown by Fanny Serano

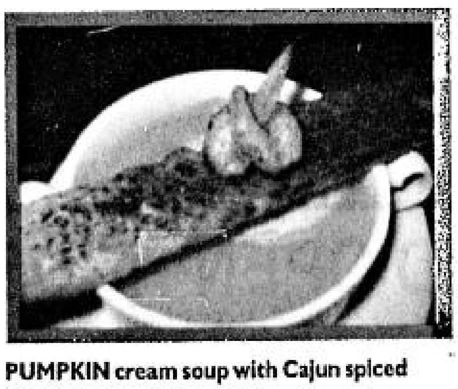
BITE-size French pastries



ORANGE-bursting romance. Tulip arrangements on each table

DALANDAN sherbet with brandy syrup

VERY berry big strawberries



PUMPKIN cream soup with Cajun spiced shrimps

CHOCOLATE soup? Bittersweet dark chocolate fondue

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

The mind of a Manila man

Borgy Manotoc

HOW do beautiful women keep men at bay? Do they beat them off with a stick? And why is it that men who make up half of the world's population are never faced with this problem?

I've never known a single man who has complained about women lusting after him. Could it be that even in this modern world, women still expect a double standard when it comes to male-female relationships?

Who am I kidding? We're in the Philippines. Of course, they do. Let's take the whole courting process that we, poor males, have to endure in the hope of gaining a woman's interest, which lasts just a tad longer than the time it takes to gulp down a beer.

I, myself, am at a complete loss when I meet a possible mate because it seems there are things they expect of me that I, in most cases, am unaware of.

I won't even mention the hours I've spent pondering a credible reason to call this knockout girl I was fortunate enough to meet the night before. This results in an increased build up of fear and anxiety, which females confuse for insecurity, lack of interest, or worse, an inability to commit.

Why can't a woman approach a man and ask him out on a date? The traditions have become outdated and are no longer practical in the modern world.

Love is meant to be impulsive and unexpected. Why limit it with boundaries and formal traditions? I am not unaware of the romance that lies in the subtleties of courting. This may work for some people but when love is lustful and passionate, there is little else that can match its ferocity and fulfillment.

Women have lobbied for decades for equal rights in every area but when it comes to the male-female non-platonic dynamic, we always get the short end of the stick (may the pun not fall on deaf ears).

Women, in my opinion, possess the ultimate form of power. They make men believe they are in control, when in truth, they tell us what to do.

Sometimes, we compromise because it makes things easier. We agree to become their pets. We're provided with everything we want, but in reality, we are completely dependent on our owners. We're given room to run around, but we're always limited by some sort of leash.

Women do what they have to do to keep us panting and drooling for more, which in all likelihood, isn't very much. As men, we have to be strong. We have more to offer than complacency or being an accessory to that perfect black dress.

Before anyone gets the wrong impression, I have the ultimate respect for women. I am, in no way, blaming them for their approach towards relationships. Both sexes are at fault. The biggest downfall I see is pride. We expect too much or too little from each other, producing a very manipulative dynamic in the relationship.

We all just want to be ourselves. We all yearn to be with someone we can be ourselves.

A lot of the time, what men really want from women is honesty. If you're not uninterested, let us know and vice-versa. Games only complicate things and distort feelings.

Of course, this is all easier said than done. In our fast-food society, we cannot waste time reading between the lines. Love is spawned from our irrational emotions. No use creating rules because love follows its own road.

The ride of unpredictability is what will push the envelope of human nature. Why miss out?

YOU ARE INVITED! CARNIVALE CARNIVORE!

Tuesday, March 23. Fortune tellers, cotton candy, popcorn, hotdogs and marshmallows. Join the circus! Fatally Femme Tuesdays at Azurro, Somerset Hotel, 104 Aguirre St., Legaspi Vil., Makati, by AMANDA GRIFFIN, BIANCA ZOBEL, KAREN GRUPP & TINA PAMINTUAN

MTV's grinding summer heats up

THE TEMPERATURE'S rising and things are really heating up as MTV continues to grind and gear up for a rocking, swinging summer.

The MTV Summer Grind Bar Tour made the rounds of the three most popular bars in Manila: V-Bar on March 2, Spirits Coyote Bar on March 6, and Absinth on March 10.

The crowd cheered wildly as they witnessed electrifying dance performances from some of the country's best grinders. Barhoppers were given a chance to audition and join the "grinding contest" for exclusive tickets to the MTV Summer Grind main event on April 3 at the NBC Tent. Auditionees were given exclusive invites to the main party. Those chosen "best grinders" will get a chance to strut their stuff before the MTV Summer Grind crowd which will be featured on MTV.

MTV Summer Grind will feature top International DJ Leeroy of Prodigy, as well as resident DJ Steve Mills and TC. The crowd will also be treated to electrifying performances by Jay-R and Arnee.

The final leg of the bar tour will be held tomorrow at Centro in Libis at 10 p.m. Don't miss your final chance to win MTV Summer Grind invites!

You can also get MTV Summer Grind Invites if you're a Smart or Addict Mobile. subscriber. Here's how: Raffle entries will be given for every 1200, 1800, 2500 or 3500 Addict Mobile Activation Plan. Smart subscribers residing in GMA will get a chance to win two exclusive MTV Summer Grind tickets for every "Best Grind Dance Pose" MMS sent. To register, key in GRIND REG<name/address>and send to 299. Five slots will be reserved for existing addict subscribers wearing red and black in all bar tours. Promo is until March 28, 2004.

Or you can log on to www.frenzy.com.ph and be a Frenzy Circle member. Or you can answer this question: What's the official timepiece of the MTV Summer Grind? The first 50 to answer correctly by calling the Technomarine Flagship Store at 757-3975 will get free tickets to the MTV Summer Grind.

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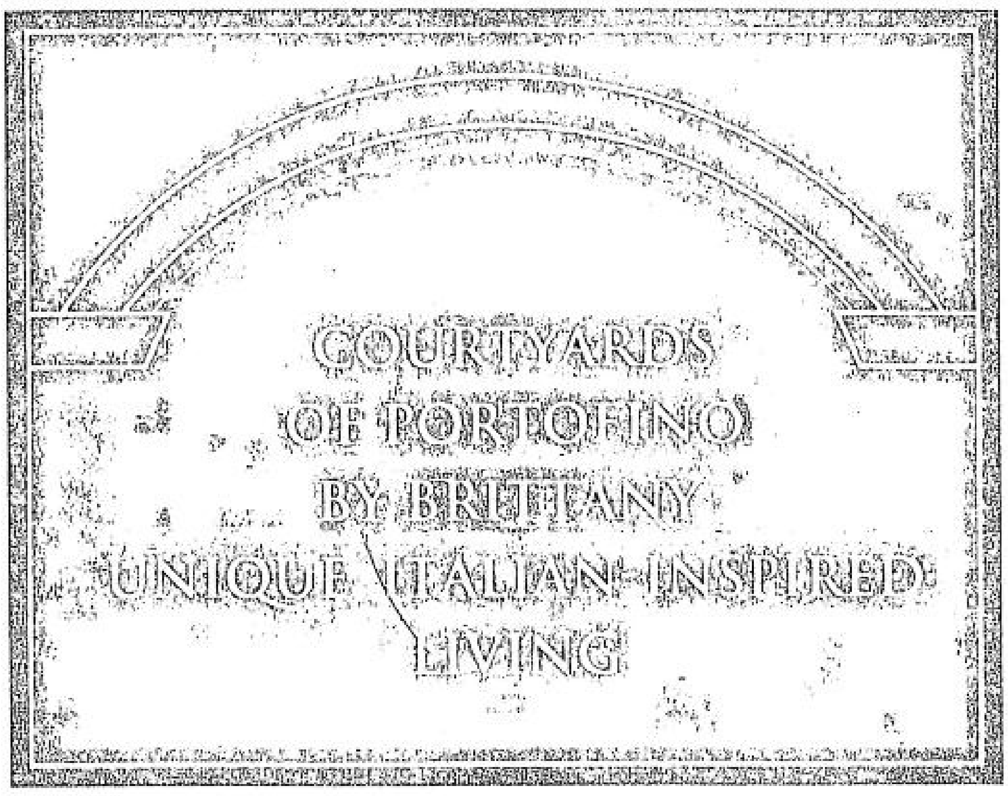


COURTYARDS OF PORTOFINO BY BRITTANY

UNIQUE ITALIAN-INSPIRED LIVING

Brittany Corporation's Portofino, the decidedly upscale, Italian-themed, residential and commercial enclave just a few minutes away from the Alabang Town Center, is now building on the success of its first four phases called Portofino Heights, with the next phase of the development offering courtyard residences.

With all lots in Portofino Heights sold out in less than a year, the courtyard units will enable limited numbers of other future residents to partake of a unique way of life that only a thoroughly planned, high-end community from Brittany can offer. The various phases of Portofino, located along the recently opened Las Piñas-Muntinlupa-Laguna-Cavite Link Road, is envisioned for families whose members are citizens of the world, their homes eloquent testimony to an elegant yet comfortable lifestyle.

Portofino by Brittany offers a limited number of Courtyard homes, laid out in a unique design in which each home features a courtyard within a courtyard, a first among residential communities in the country.

Portofino (Italian for "fine gateway") is one of four ongoing developments by Brittany Corporation, the pioneer in envisioning and building high-end, master-planned communities, each inspired by a distinctive theme. Living in Portofino will be evocative of the happy life in sunny Italy, where it is celebrated with exuberance every day. The original Portofino, a lovely seaport town in southern Italy with rolling, hilly terrain, a river and much greenery, is Brittany's inspiration for the multi-phase development project.

Portofino's courtyard homes are a one-of-a-kind application of the courtyard-within-a-courtyard concept, an ingenious design exclusive to Brittany. The concept involves all models each having its own courtyard, while being part of a cluster of homes configured within a bigger courtyard.

Each courtyard home, in the typical Italian fashion of such residences, revolves around a courtyard in the center, with terra cotta and stucco as well as pronounced arches and layers that bring on warm, cheerful feelings. The main foyer allows access to the rooms on the ground level through the courtyard. The windows gracing the balconies permit light from outdoors to enter, while the open space in the center of each villa affords natural cooling against tropical temperatures. Arcades supported by columns, fountains and gardens will accent the soothing view of each courtyard from the halls within. The courtyard space of each home will be perfect for entertaining company or as a private area where family members may simply relax together. Some of the courtyard residences will feature charming *casitas*, rooms on the ground level ideal for staying guests.

Reminiscent of an Italian setting, the Portofino courtyard residences will boast streets of cobblestone and adornments consisting of statues, fountains and benches.

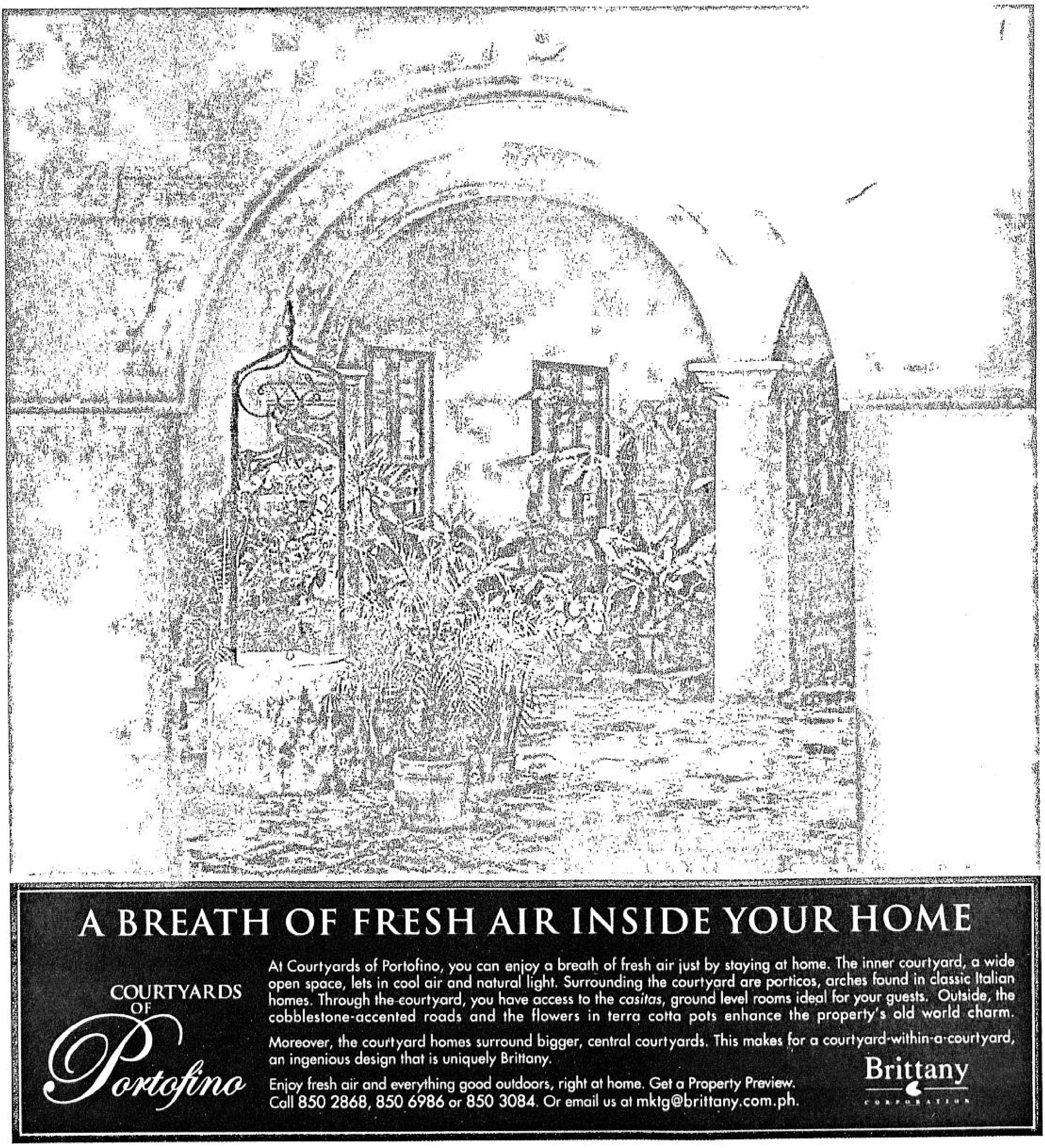
In keeping with Brittany's faithfully observed architectural and other development guidelines to maintain the integrity of each community's theme, the courtyard units at Portofino, clustered in cozy communities, are available in four models. Named after European masters, the models are the Cezanne (floor area 193 sq. m.), the Monet (floor area 233 sq. m.), the Raphael (floor area 247 sq. m.), and the Rembrandt (floor area 260 sq. m.). Selling prices range from Php 7.8 million to Php15 million for home and lot packages.

While adhering to architectural guidelines, Brittany is careful about striking a balance, not impinging on the personal preferences and tastes of residents. Like other Brittany offerings, the courtyard residences of Portofino are meant for families with discerning taste.

Each Courtyard home at Brittany's Portofino is highlighted by an inner courtyard, maximizing use of space as well as natural light and ventilation. The design is inspired by Italian homes that are structured around a courtyard, which "brings the outdoors, indoors" with arcades, benches and fountains.

Each residence will be a jewel, magnificently designed and built, giving the best that life can offer to its happy owner, the lord of his very own manor and proud possessor of a fine home, indeed!

ADVT'L.



A BREATH OF FRESH AIR INSIDE YOUR HOME

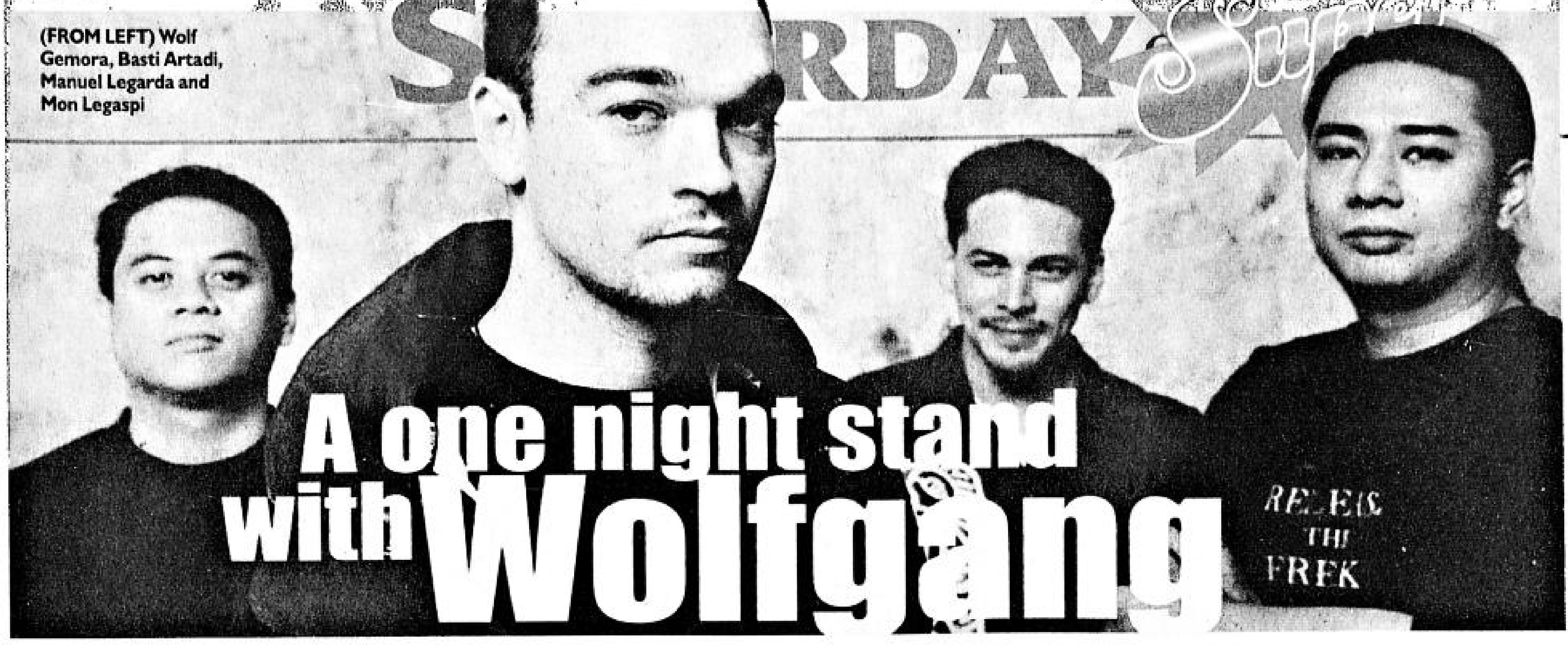
COURTYARDS
OF
Portofino

At Courtyards of Portofino, you can enjoy a breath of fresh air just by staying at home. The inner courtyard, a wide open space, lets in cool air and natural light. Surrounding the courtyard are porticos, arches found in classic Italian homes. Through the courtyard, you have access to the *casitas*, ground level rooms ideal for your guests. Outside, the cobblestone-accented roads and the flowers in terra cotta pots enhance the property's old world charm.

Moreover, the courtyard homes surround bigger, central courtyards. This makes for a courtyard-within-a-courtyard, an ingenious design that is uniquely Brittany.

Enjoy fresh air and everything good outdoors, right at home. Get a Property Preview.
Call 850 2868, 850 6986 or 850 3084. Or email us at mktg@brittany.com.ph.

Brittany
CORPORATION



A one night stand with Wolfgang

(FROM LEFT) Wolf Gemora, Basti Artadi, Manuel Legarda and Mon Legaspi

SUPER! gets to chat with ¾ of one of the biggest Pinoy rock acts

By Maui V. Reyes

"Miss *ko na to*!" Basti Artadi shouts to the crowd after taking a swig of his Red Horse. "*Walang ganyan sa* States!" someone in the audience shouts. Basti laughs and raises his beer in the air.

There's a long line of people all decked in black right outside a building flanked by a giant blown-up beer bottle, smack in the middle of Makati. If I didn't know better, I would have thought it was a cheesy beer launch that was being held in a clearly too-small venue, or that these people were waiting their turn to get in a secret club. My friend Vince and I circled the block about four times before realizing that the place was Peligro, where one of the '90s best Pinoy rock bands were reuniting for a one-night only show.

People might think it was an odd choice of location for a reunion "gig"—in fact, it was a last-minute, spur-of-the-moment decision. But if you're talking about a Wolfgang reunion show, even a last-minute one, you'd better expect a body count of more than 200.

The place morphed into an instant fire hazard, as family, friends, fans and listers boozed while singing along with every single song the band churned out. They laughed, they cried, they sweated buckets while downing the free Jagermeisters in test tubes. The only thing lacking was a campfire and s'mores.

"I'm kinda feeling bad for those people outside. I hope they can find a way to make them all fit," Basti tells me before the show.

Do that and we might all just suffocate.

The Truth is...

No, they didn't break up because of big fights, or ego trips, or unexplained text messages (oh wait a second, that was *another* band). It actually has a little bit to do with the embassy.

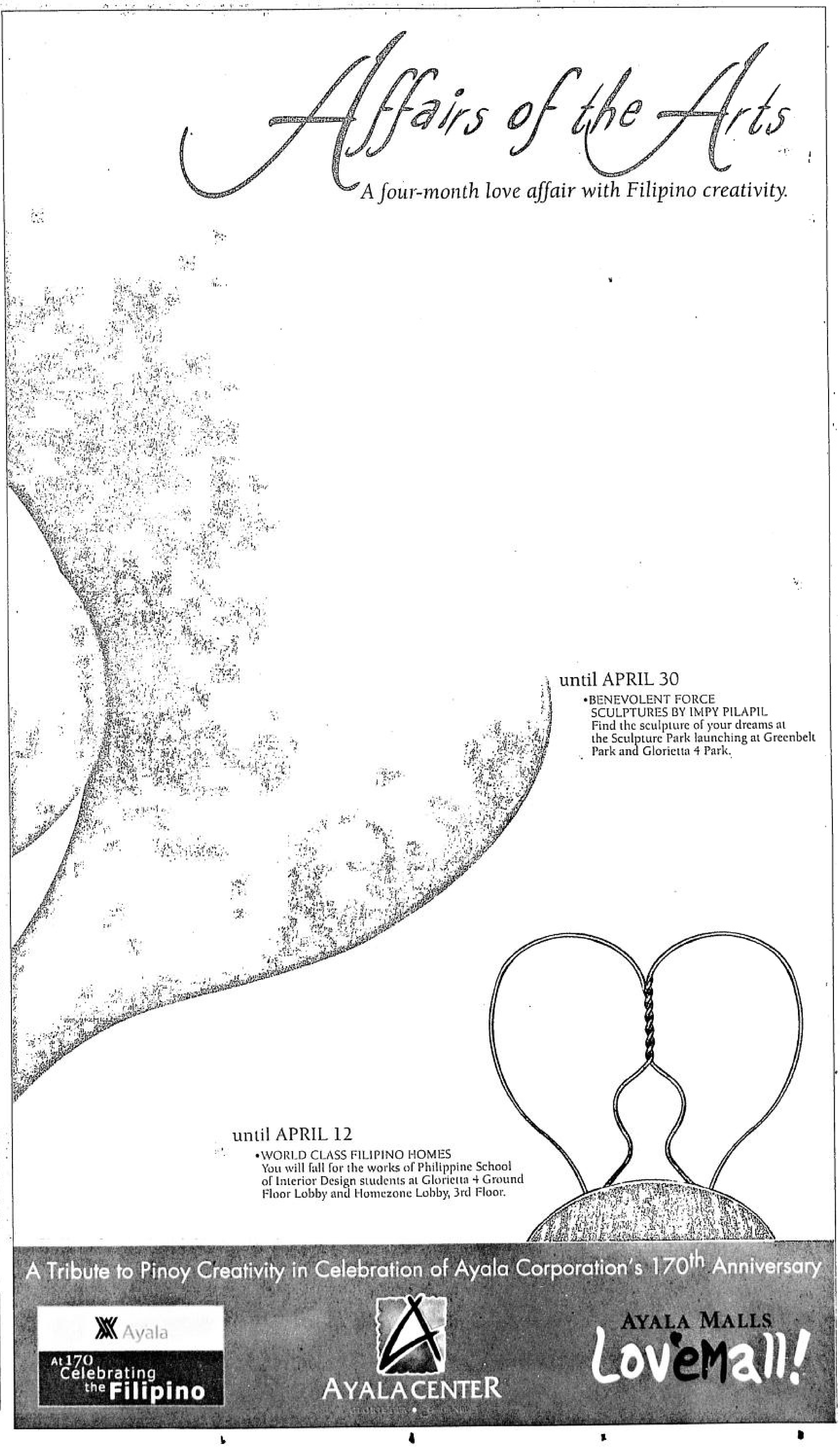
"Actually the plan was we were going to the States to play, but that kinda fell apart, because of visa problems," Basti shares. "So I just decided to settle down (in the States) and get married."

Not to say that the band kissed music goodbye. In fact, they've each formed or joined different bands. Basti does vocals for Kitaan in San Francisco, guitarist Manuel Legarda is

A ONE/ 12

A SCENE from the gig

FLASHBACK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Ayala
At 170 Celebrating the Filipino

AYALA CENTER

AYALA MALLS
LoveMall!

A one night stand with Wolfgang

From page 1

with Dirt, Wolf Gemora plays the drums for L.A.-based Lokomotiv, and bassist Mon Legaspi just joined The Dawn.

So what brought these three (Wolf's in LA fixing his visa) together for a night?

"I came back because of family. We had no plans of getting together for anything, this is really a last minute, spur-of-the-moment thing. It was just supposed to be a small thing," Basti says.

"Basti arrived and one of the owners of the place called me and Basti if we wanted to play. For old time's sake, why not?" Manuel shares. Mon agrees. "I just got a text from Manuel, and well, Basti's not coming back for some time, so I thought it would be fun. Plus it would bring back memories."

Learning the songs all over again didn't exactly pose much of a problem for the band.

"A few bars into a song, you kind of remember how it goes. It was actually kind of fun," Mon says smiling.

If you missed the gig last February 20, well, it might take some time before you hear "Atomica" or "Sanctified" played live.

"I don't see myself coming back just to play or getting together just to play. If ever we do, it would be exactly like this. We're all just here, so might as well make the most of it. I think you have to move on, you gotta do what you gotta do," Basti says, before going onstage. "I love music, that's why I'm still playing."

THE MANY faces of Wolfgang

RELEASE THE FREAK

Save the VH1 Special...

...Super! does the whole "Where are they now?" bit for you.

BASTI ARTADI

What he's been up to: Moved to San Francisco, got married, and joined Kitaan.

Initially planned: To settle down. After three months, he started itching to create music again. "That's what I do. And right now, the plan is to play as much as possible."

Most important thing he learned while in Wolfgang: "Don't count your chickens before they've hatched," he says. "In this business, your hopes are going to get built up a lot. And if you rely on what other people say, before they've actually materialized, sometimes you end up falling flat on your face ... and that hurts." That and to "do what your heart tells you to do. It sounds corny, but it's true."

Best Wolfgang record: Black Mantra. "Because of the way we were working together, the way we were playing, it was the best."

Wolfgang member most likely to succeed: "I think the potential is there for everyone to make it. It's just a matter of when it will happen," he pauses. "You're trying to get me into trouble."

How much the rock scene has changed: "I haven't been home for two years, so I can't really comment on the rock scene. From what I've heard, it's gone underground. Bands are playing for the love of playing. I think that'll always be there, that's why bands pick up instruments to play."

MANUEL LEGARDA

What he's been up to: Working as an engineer at Hit Productions, works the guitar with Dirt, with Jay Ortega, Miguel from Razorback, and Paolo from Dog Bone.

Initially planned: To be a farmer in Bukidnon. Seriously. "But there are too many things in the city to give up, so I looked for something to do here instead."

Most important thing he's learned from Wolfgang: "You really have to work together as a group to achieve your goals. If you do it right, you can go a long way."

Best Wolfgang record: Serve in Silence. "I had to learn the songs again (for this gig) ... and it could be because I haven't listened to it in awhile, and I've forgotten how the songs went. I think it's one of our better-recorded albums. But of course, I also like Black Mantra."

Wolfgang member most likely to succeed: "I don't know. I don't think I have the energy to start from scratch. I will be writing and recording music on my own and with friends, but I don't know if I'm ready to make a go at touring again and all that. There's a lot of unpleasantness that comes with touring. The fun part is playing for people, but it's also hard when you have to get into a tight van and you're all cramped and when you get there you're not really relaxed ... I could tour on a limited basis, but not like before. I'm not going to give up all my weekends to tour ... I have other interests besides music. Like going to the beach or hanging out with friends, a lot of whom I've lost touch with because of being in Wolfgang."

How much the rock scene has changed: "I hardly go out. Dirt plays a bunch of gigs, but it's mostly in Alabang, and it's only then that I get to see other bands. I can't really say that I see the representation of the entire rock scene. I can't really say I know what's going on right now. I'm kind of lost."

MON LEGASPI

What he's been up to: Playing with The Dawn.

Initially planned: To play with The Dawn. Was already asked to join while he was still in Wolfgang, and eventually agreed when Basti announced he wasn't coming home.

Most important thing he's learned from Wolfgang: Handle work-related situations better. "I've also learned to trust myself and the band to come through even at the worst times. I try to apply this to things that happen to me personally."

Best Wolfgang Record: Black Mantra. "I think that was the time we streamlined the songwriting. We produced it ourselves and we had new equipment! I think if we made more albums after Black Mantra, they would have been better."

Wolfgang member most likely to succeed: "Basti. He's the singer, but then again, the States is an entirely different world."

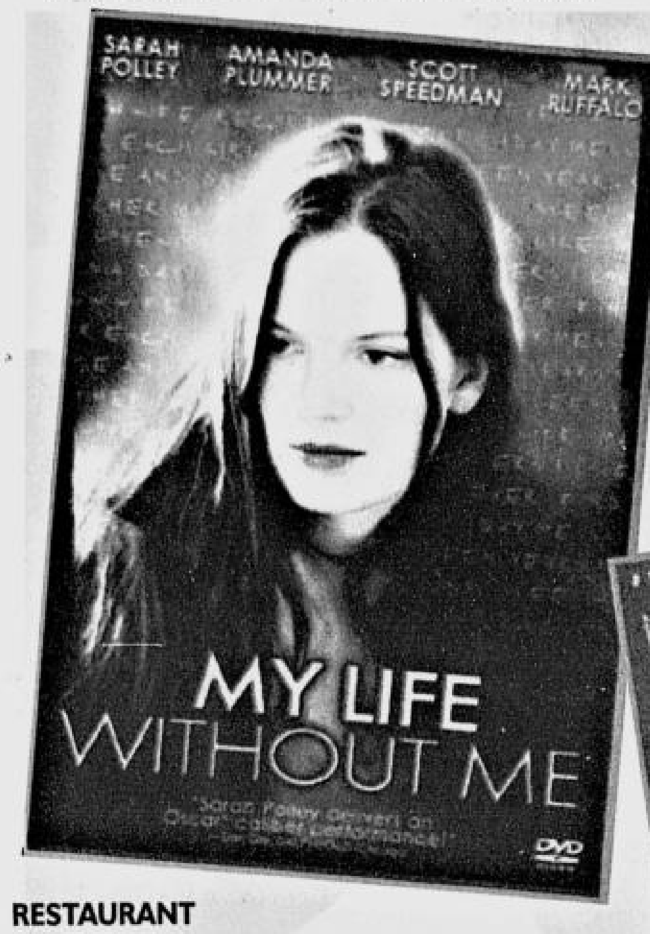
How much the rock scene has changed: "I rarely go out. Before, there were lots of places where people could play. Lately, it's been more of these guys who are trying to be like John Mayer, that acoustic singer. If you're not a folk singer in a bar, you're not hip. And then of course there are those screaming bands for the younger audience. I think the industry has to take a risk for something to happen."

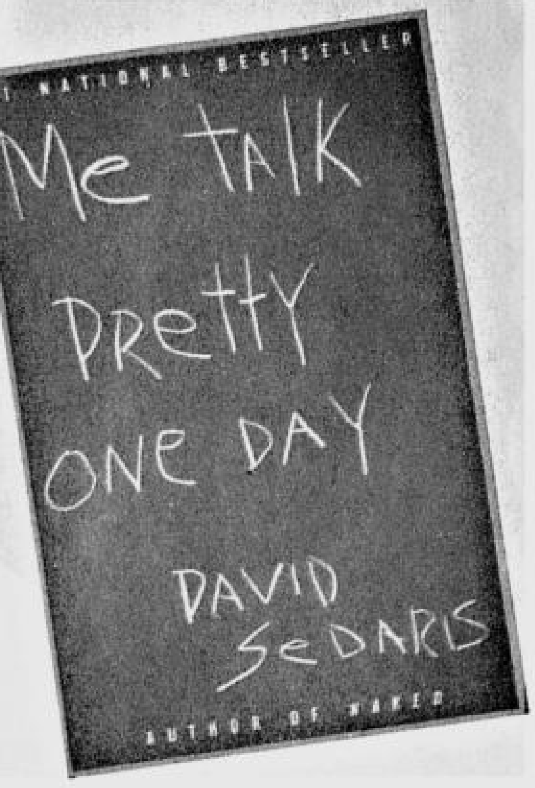
Maui V. Reyes

Super Selections

Nothing to do this weekend? Check out our latest movie, TV show, CD, resto, and DVD picks

By Maui V. Reyes





DVD

My Life Without Me
Directed by Isabel Coixet

There are a few films that make you stop and think about your life. This is one of them. Ann (Sarah Polley) is a 23-year-old woman married to the only guy she's ever kissed (Scott Speedman). They have two kids and live in a trailer behind her mother's house. When Ann finds out she's terminally ill and has only two months to "fix" her life, she makes a list of things she has to do before she dies (one is to sleep with another man "just to see what it's like" and another is to find a new wife for her husband). Of course, there are some scenes that can make you tear up (Ann recording a birthday message for each of her daughters until their 18th birthday). Overall, *My Life Without Me* is just one of many films masquerading as a wake-up call to finally get your life on track.

BOOK

Me Talk Pretty One Day
By David Sedaris

Ever wanted to know what it's like to be homosexual bum? *Me Talk Pretty One Day* is the autobiography of David Sedaris, a fortysomething man whose family is as dysfunctional as the next. David's father has raised the kids thinking they were prodigies. Except for David, who goes from struggling artist to moving furniture to settling down with a French man while learning to speak the language. There are random laugh-out moments, like David as a middle-school child who avoids having to use the letter "s" by consulting a thesaurus he carries around wherever he goes ("I get more than one gift on my birthday"). Generally, it's a peek into a sad man's life with absolutely no direction.

RESTAURANT

Cosa Nostra
19511 M. Adriatico St. Malate
Tel. 5237889

It's a bit hard to find this little gem, but when you do, you'll immediately succumb to its old world charm. Cosa Nostra, established in 1983, is where most advertising hotshots head off to satisfy their pizza-pasta cravings. Its freshly-made thin-crust pizza is what draws the crowd. Bestsellers are: Seafood (with clams and shrimps), Four-Cheese, and Fontana (cheese with shrimps) pizzas. The absolute must-try, however, would be the infamous Pesto pizza (P280). We suggest you order extra to take home.

CD

Blink 182, Blink 182
Universal Music Group

Blink 182 once pointed out that the topics of their songs don't exactly mature, but their songwriting does. Either way, Blink 182's self-titled album sounds more Box Car Racer than vintage Blink. Definitely their best album yet, Blink features heavier riffs and a collaboration with The Cure's Robert Smith make this album a must-have ... that is, if the singles "Feeling This" and "I Miss You" haven't convinced you enough already.

TV SHOW

American Idol
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8 p.m. on Star World

We promised ourselves we wouldn't watch it, lest we be accused of being total sell-outs.

But we couldn't resist the bad auditions, Simon's nasty comments, and the occasional contestant that makes us go, "Damn, she's got talent." *American Idol* may be a complete waste of a full hour, but how can you say no to William Hung's unforgettable rendition of "She Bangs"?

Bundy clock bondage

SWAK!

by Lex

I DON'T want to become busy as a bee.

Nor do I want to work like a dog or slave like an ant.

I can't be in a place where others dictate what I can and cannot do. I need to be free. I've done my time as an underling. While I stare at the wall hoping to be transported to another dimension, I figure something out. Something cosmic and earth shattering: I don't need to be here.

Graduating from engineering

As an undergrad, I did as my classmates did and went with the flow. Not knowing what I wanted to do with my life, I joined the masses and looked for a job. Lo and behold I got an offer. It was from a major Singaporean construction firm. At the time, it sounded like a good idea.

In the dungeon

On my first day at work, I entered the office and I was welcomed into a whole, new world—a substrata of humanity that held an uncanny resemblance to Hitler's Germany. The baptism of fire began immediately. As I walked in, I saw my big, bad, bearded British boss. (He looked like Tom Hanks in the movie *Castaway*. I do not exaggerate. I even have a picture.)

Standing by the Bundy clock

I soon got acquainted with his daily routine. He would guard the clock like a gargoyle checking on who came late. Anyone clocking in after 8 a.m. would be greeted by curses in a thick Cockney accent.

After a year of verbal abuse, I quit. Enough of counting reinforcement bars in columns and watching concrete being poured.

Surely there was more to life than this daily grind. I didn't want to work my entire life within the confines of an office making someone else rich. I didn't like the idea that after a certain number of years I could only go so far.

I put up my own business, because I didn't mind putting everything on the line, even if it meant giving up my twice-a-month salary. I wanted to be able to look back and say: "At one point in my life I risked it all."

It's been a couple of years, and I'm still convinced this is one of the best decisions I've ever made. I'm not exactly rolling in dough yet, but being an entrepreneur definitely has its perks.

For one, I don't have to wear shoes to work. My sandals feel just fine. Plus, I get to be the boss I've always dreamed of having. Most importantly, I have the privilege of working with some of the most honest, intelligent, and hard working bunch of people I know.

Blame it on the grain

Our culture dictates that there is a clearly defined path to success. First, finish school. Next, get a job. Then, devote your entire life working in one company, and hopefully, before you retire, you'll some spiffy title on your desk like "manager" or "vice president." I am not totally knocking out corporate life. I just knew early on that I would never flourish in a predetermined environment.

In other professions, others have gone against convention and in the process, turned their industries upside down. Who would have guessed that by playing up his *kenkoy* persona, Ogie Alcasid would eventually go neck-and-neck against singing icons with more imposing physical attributes say, like Martin Nievera and Gary V.?

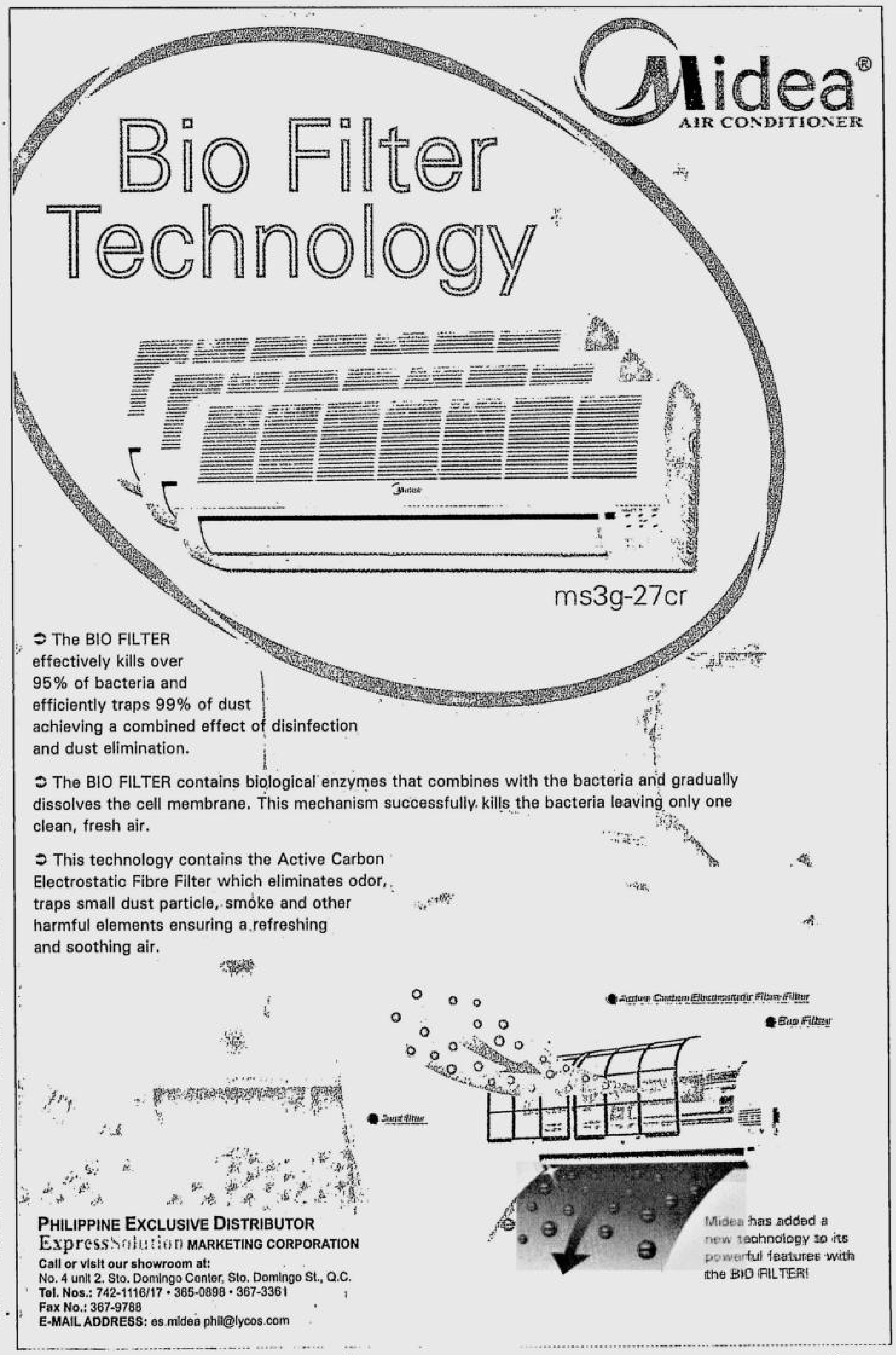
Audiences are also going gaga over the Akafellas who dare introduce a new sound in the mainstream.

Bituin Escalante has also broken the myth that theater mainstays cannot cross over to the pop arena. She is sassy and different and the public recognizes her as one of the best vocal talents in this country.

Going against the grain can be a beautiful thing. It takes guts but the glory is never guaranteed. But if you don't stick out your neck and try, how will you know the stuff you're made of?

If you follow your passion, regardless of whether you succeed or fail, at the end of it all, you can look at yourself in the mirror and say "I have no regrets."

Bet big, amigos and amigas and go for it! And if you need to chat, e-mail me at swak1@info.com.ph.



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In the heat of a spending spree

SUMMER SHOPPING 2004

Spending more time than money in the mall

By Normandy de la Paz

"IT'S SUMMER time, and the living is (NOT) easy...", so the song goes by the famous band The Zombies. The word "not" in this famous song is added to the lyrics by a new band of zombies - we Filipinos. Being plagued by a lot of problems such as skyrocketing gas prices, coupled with a humongous electric and water bill, we really feel not only the heat but also the economic crunch this summer. But summer, my friend, is also the time when you get to relax, unwind and leave your problems behind. It is the time when you shout "Woooooooooo!" as you head off to the beach or any famous resort for that matter.

Wait, isn't money our problem in the first place? So deflate your fake Donald Duck lifesaver, kick off your uneven swim fins, and throw your worn out goggles away because we're heading off to the mall. Yes, the mall—the last bastion for those who are flat broke. The mall that says "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore, send these, the homeless, the tempest-tossed, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door." (taken from the poem by Emma Lazarus without permission—please don't sue; can also be found on the base of the Statue of Liberty).

Who says you can't have fun this summer without lots of or no money at all. When you're a mallrat, this shopping Mecca is your kingdom, and you the rat king. There are lots of things to do around there that will make you forget that you don't have moolah to shell out for a summer vacation, plus it is a cheap way to beat the heat. Here are just some of them:

Go to a record bar - Sample the latest tunes on the demo CD player. Democracy is working for you here so whip it, and whip it good. Like REM says, "It's a free world baby." No one can tell you that you've spent enough time with the player, unless of course, the one telling you is a person as big as Fat Joe, or as brawny as 50 Cent.

Read books at the bookstore - Some bookstores even provide a couch where one can sit and read their books. If you have loose change in your pocket, put some on the bookstore's donation box, which supports charitable institutions. Consider it as a tip for the free use of the books and couch.

Befriend the music store clerks - If you're into music, it's a good way to have free jamming sessions at a music store. Most music store clerks know the stuff they're selling. Being a mallrat, you are now gifted with the knowledge of the latest tunes; and the newest stuff about guitars, drums, amplifiers, bands, etc. And that is because of the hundreds of thousands of hours you spent in the record bar and bookstore. Talk to them and impress them with what you know. There are only two things they can do: kick you out of the store because they know you don't have money; or bring you into the exclusive headbangers fold.

Sample the free food tasting - Live the life, indulge in FINE (Free Ito Ngasabin, Enjoy!) dining only the mall can give you. It's free, so eat, drink (if there are free drinks) and be merry. Ah yes, food definitely tastes better when it is not being paid for by you.

Relax at a beauty shop - Pamper yourself, again for free. Some beauty shops offer free facial mask, foot spa, hair protein and massager demos. So sit down, relax, and enjoy the feeling of being well-taken care of by courteous and prompt attendants. And if your "kapalmuks" (*kapal ng mukha*) has been lessened by the facial scrub, at least buy something from their shop even if its just a small can of *cebo-de-macho*.

The mall is definitely a surfboard on a sea of dilemmas whose waves continuously pound on us Filipinos. Much like waves driving the surfer to use his surfboard, the everyday problems we face are what urge us to go to the mall. Whether you're surfboarding on a beach, or lollygaging at the mall, it's the same thing, we get to forget our problems, even only for a short while—though the second one is unquestionably more economical. The newspapers tell us the waves are high, so what are you waiting for, let's go mall surfing!

Life's a thrill!

Unexpected finds. Sweet discoveries. Dazzling fashion.
Amazing food. Astounding art. And shows that'll
take your breath away! Get tickled. Get all excited.
Discover all-new choices at the Shang. Ain't it just a thrill?

Shangri-La Plaza

Shopping here, there and everywhere

What's happening and opening in and around the Metro's shopping centers

Big retailers event at World Trade Center

SUPERMARKET Show, the pioneer event that gathers the retail industry's decision makers, will be held from July 14 to 17 at the World Trade Center.

Now on its 8th year, Supermarket Show continues to uphold its tradition of matching retailers nationwide with the leading suppliers of innovative products, equipment and technology. The four-day event will give opportunities to capture the interest and influence the decisions of a highly targeted and growing market.

Close to 23,000 people visited Supermarket Show two years ago. More visitors are expected to grace this productive event that covers every segment of the retailing industry.

"With the feedback and numerous requests we have been receiving from the retail sector, we are excited to once again gather the industry's decision makers, brands and companies in an even bigger and better Supermarket Show," announced Ramon Soriano, president, Expotrade.

"No other event can guide and lead retailers towards the industry's best. In the Supermarket Show, we mean business-your business," Soriano added.

For information, call Expotrade and Meeting Points International at 890-7532 or 895-2363.

Coming soon: The Shang Cineplex

THE MUCH-AWAITED Shang Cineplex of Shangri-La Plaza is scheduled to open its doors in early June 2004. Eagerly anticipated by movie fanatics and film enthusiasts, five new cinemas will feature cutting edge design incorporating fun, vibrancy and technology.

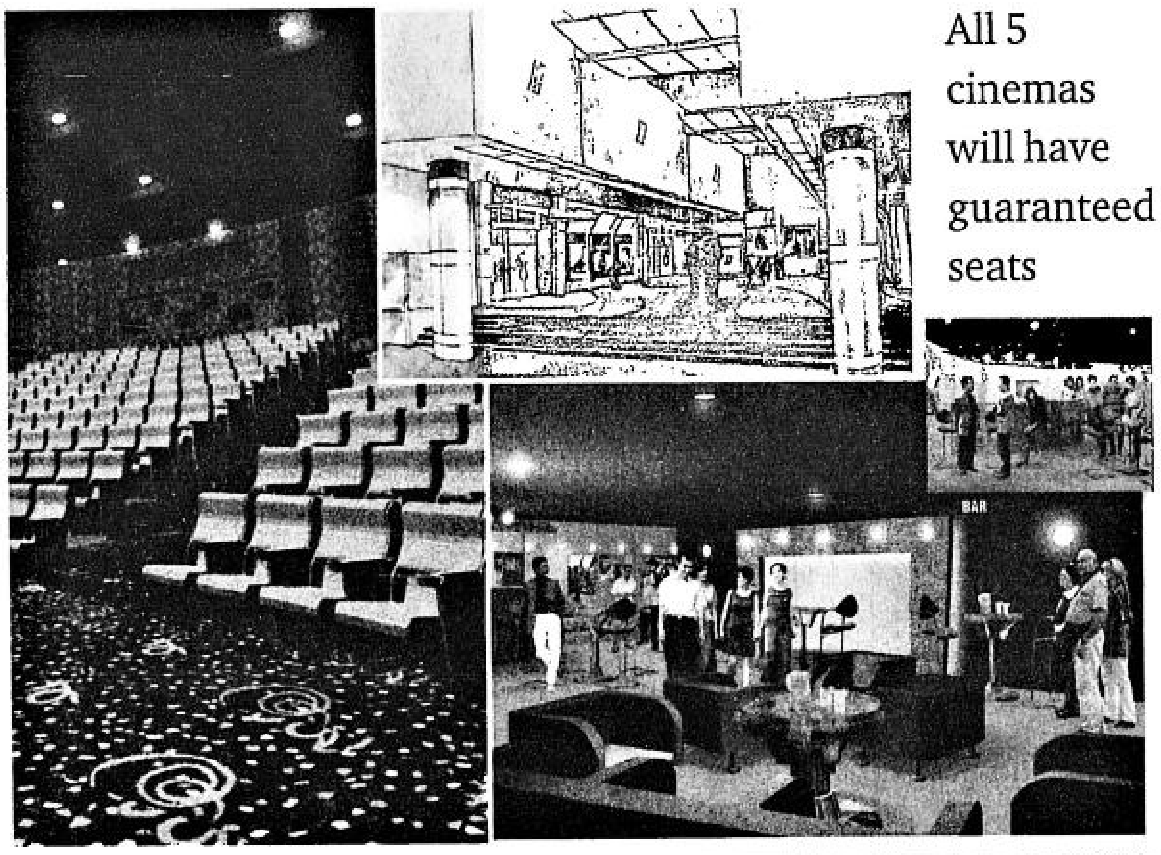
The two-level Shang Cineplex, which will be located on Levels 6 and 7, will cover a total of 5,600 square meters. It will have stadium seating with moveable arm rests and cup holders, state-of-the-art equipment and theater design, wide screens acoustic treatment, a digital sound system and ideal sightlines from any seat in the theater.

All 5 cinemas, one of them for private viewing, will all have guaranteed seats. The Cineplex's private cinema, which will seat less than 100 persons, will have regular screening. It will feature a lounge and bar facility for exclusive use of the private cinema viewers. It will also be made available to exclusive corporate and social functions, either with cinema viewing or for conferences and launches.

The Shang Cineplex will have a spacious lobby with a snack bar and a carefully chosen food and beverage offerings from the casual dining outlets operating beyond mall hours. It will also have a special cocktail or reception area for cinema events like movie premiers and film festivals.

For more information on the Shang Cineplex, call 633-7851.

Shangri-La Plaza is PRA and DTI's Best Shopping Center of the Year.



All 5 cinemas will have guaranteed seats

WATSONS BRANCHES OUT IN GREENHILLS
Watsons, the largest health and beauty retail chain in Asia, recently opened its doors to shoppers at Greenhills in San Juan where treats and sample products welcomed the shoppers during the grand opening. Watsons, which offers products for the personal well-being of clients, is a drugstore-cum-personal care one-stop-shop. It offers more than 25,000 different products from more than 20 countries, including cosmetics, toiletries, fashion accessories, medicines, confectionery, cards and toys. Shown are (from left) Grace Rivera, merchandising director of Watsons Philippines, Jayzen Soriano, store manager of Watsons Philippines Greenhills branch and Nigel AS Healey, managing director of Watsons Philippines. Watsons Greenhills is the company's 91st store in the Philippines.

RICH POPEYES CAJUN FLAVOR INVADES ROBINSONS PLACE
Students, doctors, nurses, government employees and tourists in Manila have all spent joyful times eating or shopping in Robinsons Place, Ermita's pride. People have another reason for visiting Robinsons Place nowadays. Popeyes, home of Louisiana cooking, famous for its chicken and biscuits, recently opened a spacious smart-looking outlet in Robinsons Place Manila. Popeyes distinctive dishes-including the Jambalaya, more popularly known in the United States as 'dirty rice', Shrimp poppers served with tartar sauce and tasty squid rings would surely tantalize your senses. Creamy mashed potatoes drenched in aromatic gravy should be had with Popeyes mild or spicy chicken, dunk in a fluffy biscuit and you get a great filling meal. Proud, excited and quite rarin' to serve are the people from Popeyes (from left) Putra Wirakesuma, international director for operations, Ervie Pajarillo (3rd from left), store manager, Danny Pumarega, operations manager, and Mauie Tamsi, product manager. Also in attendance for the opening is Cita Astals (2nd from left), Manila City Councilor.

GREENHILLS EXHIBIT
The 11th National Furniture, Furnishing and Fashion Show at the Greenhills Shopping Complex is ongoing until March 28. World-class furniture is the main product of the 24-day trade fair organized by Prime Asia Trade Planners and Convention Organizers (Patepco). Considered the best 'tiangge' in the country, bargain hunters and shoppers from Metro Manila and the provinces crowd Greenhills because of many goods and products sold at factory prices.

Italian Fair at Crossing Department Store

ENJOY discounts of up to 70 percent on various Italian brands as Crossings Department Store presents "Italian Fair 2004". Shoppers can avail themselves of great buys from a wide array of merchandise—from accessories to apparel to leather goods— that will surely meet their various preferences for high-quality products.

Visit Crossings Department Store and enjoy great discounts on these Italian pieces until March 31. CDS branches are located at Shangri-la Plaza Mall in Mandaluyong City and at Quezon Avenue corner Scout Borromeo in Quezon City.

For inquiries, call 635-4410 to 15 or 373-2550 to 51.

Darphin Beauty Institute at The Podium

DARPHIN Beauty Institute opens its newest shop at The Podium in Ortigas Center. Located at the 4th Level, Darphin Beauty Institute offers facial treatments using Darphin products, which are formulated to answer the specific needs of each skin type and condition. As a result, skin will be cleansed, nourished and balanced as the treatments remove the toxins that cause the dullness and dryness of the skin.

Enjoy the relaxing benefits of the treatments under the expert hands of the Darphin beauty therapists and discover a unique way of caring for your skin. Discover beauty from within only at Darphin Beauty Institute.

For inquiries, call 634-6660.

ITALIAN FAIR
UP TO
70% OFF
ON SELECTED ACCESSORIES,
APPAREL AND
LEATHER GOODS

PROMO PERIOD: FEBRUARY 27-MARCH 31, 2004

CROSSINGS
DEPARTMENT STORE

• SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL, EDSA CORNER SHAW BOULEVARD
MANDALUYONG CITY
• 432 QUEZON AVENUE CORNER SCOUT BORROMEO
QUEZON CITY

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A3-150, Series of 2004

Made for U at Megamall

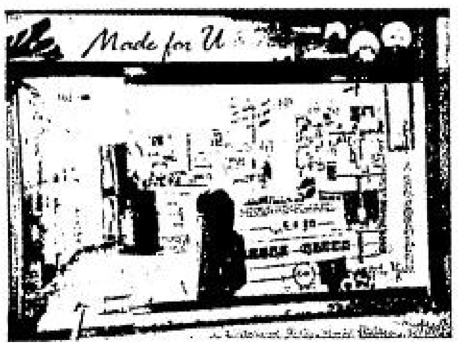
MADE for U, one of the country's foremost specialists in made-to-order corporate giveaways and personalized gifts for special occasions, is making its presence felt in the booming Philippine retail sector. This March, it marks the opening of a new store at SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City, the country's largest world-class mall at the heart of bustling Ortigas business and commercial center.

A one-stop-shop of creative solutions especially designed for today's customers who have exacting standards and specifications, Made for U offers a wide array of services. These range from unique gift items, communications media, exclusive awards, souvenirs, branding accessories, and commemorative memorabilia to election paraphernalia. Made for U's key strength lies in a combination of attentive customer service and the utilization of the most updated technology to create quality customized gifts and paraphernalia.

To avail yourself of Made for U's embroidery, etching, engraving, stamping, printing, weaving and other related services, check out the new store at the lower ground floor of SM Megamall Building A, Mandaluyong City. Other branches are at the upper ground floor of SM Southmall, Almanza, Las Pinas City; level 2, Glorietta 4, Ayala Center, Makati City; and level 2, Ayala Center Cebu, Cebu Business Park, Cebu City. Among Made for U's bestselling items as far as corporate clients in Metro Manila are concerned are sports shirts, T-shirts and baseball caps. Made for U uses modern equipment like its 15-color embroidery machines. It can also do photographic etching (intricate markings) on glasses, which its competitors are not capable of.

Whether your thoughts are along the lines of customized gift items like picture frames, vases, bottles, jars, pillows or stuffed toys, or run the gamut from desktop penholders, cardholders, pens, ad cubes to stylized dining ware like drinking glasses, mugs, plates or placemats, or uniquely printed or embroidered fashion accessories that include shirts, caps, bags, and many more, Made for U can personalize your gifts any way you choose.

Shown below is a Made for U store with its pleasing array of gifts, giveaways, tokens and other one-of-a-kind merchandise custom made for impact and real downhome value.



13 Reasons to stay on Cloud 9 with the Equitable Travel Card

THE SUCCESS that was the take-off of the Equitable Travel Card is now on high altitude! Launched at the SM Megatrade Hall during the 11th Travel Tour Expo 2004, the Equitable Travel Card makes other travel mileage cards pale in comparison to its wide array of perks and benefits. And the timing is never more perfect! Sun, sea and sky spell summer and as we plot out our holiday plans, it is always good to make it as worry-free as possible.

Keep in mind a vacation checklist that ensures a stress-free escape to your chosen destination. Look into transport and road safety. Plan your itinerary and follow it strictly to make the most out of your time and money.

The weather suggests considering clothing. Get the information ahead and plan out your wardrobe. You may take minimal clothing and decide to shop at your destination.

Budget is tops in creating a hassle-free holiday trip. Map out your expenses and make sure to stick to it. Otherwise, make sure you have a handy expense companion that will give you the freedom to choose and give you rewards for your choice. Thirteen reasons to stay on cloud 9 with the Equitable Travel Card:

1. Earn rewards faster. Enjoy one of the lowest exchange rates for earning points with 1 travel E-Point for every Php40.00. Other cards' Php45.00 = 1 mile.

2. Your choice to pay in dollar or peso for purchases made abroad. Other cards accept payment in peso only.

3. Redeem your points for a world of rewards. From great travel merchandise, local and foreign vacations, hotel stays and more! Other card rewards are limited to free flights on a single airline only.

4. More value for money with savings on interest charges on unpaid or outstanding balance. Other cards charge interest on average daily balance.

5. Zero annual service fee for the first 2 years and no joining fee! Other cards charge Php600 service fee.

6. It has the widest acceptance worldwide with over 32 million commercial establishments in more than 210 countries wherever the MasterCard symbol is displayed.

7. Avail of appliances, computer and other big-ticket items payable in 3,6,9,12,18 or 24 monthly installments at low interest.

8. Get cash, every time, everywhere at more than 5,000 MegaLink of BancNet ATMs nationwide.

9. Avail of 24-hour Equitable Hello Service through the 24-hour hotline 8679777 or 1-800-1-888-3264 (Domestic Toll Free).

10. Access the Equitable Card website www.equitablecard.com for statement inquiries and on-line payments.

11. Get automatic insurance for up to P2 million when you charge your travel fare.

12. Get automatic 24-hour Personal Accident Insurance worth up to five times your previous month's purchases.

13. Settle Equitable Travel Card bills at any of the more than 400 branches of Equitable PCIBank and Equitable Savings Bank nationwide.

Getting to and getting back from your destination is rewarding with an Equitable Travel Card, the travel necessity and lifestyle essential you must not be without. Bon voyage!

SM
Appliance Center
BANKARD
A YGC Member
0%
SPECTACULAR
INSTALLMENT
SALE
0% INTEREST
on 3, 6 & 12-month installment plan
for a minimum purchase of P3,000.
Also available at selected
SM Appliance Center branches
SM City
FAIRVIEW
March 17-28
BANKARD
VISA

*on selected items

• SM CITY NORTH EDSA 9279335 • NORTH EDSA ANNEX 9276578 • NORTH EDSA BASEMENT 9272650 • SM MAKATI 8161178 • HARRISON PLAZA 5246239 • SM CUBAO 9111359 • SM MEGAMALL 6335075
• SM CENTERPOINT 7150534 • SM SOUTHMALL 8003512 • SM CITY BACOOR (046) 4170258 • SM CITY FAIRVIEW 4176795 • SM CITY CEBU (032) 2319133 • SM DELGADO (033) 3373102 • SM CITY MANILA 5238593
• SM CITY PAMPANGA (045) 9616991 • SUCAT 8297346 • SM CITY ILOILO (033) 320-6355 • SM CITY DAVAO (082) 2977064 • ROCKWELL 8981519 • PODIUM 6871215 • SM CITY BICUTAN 7779295
• SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO (088) 8592501 • SM CITY LUCENA (042) 7105032 • SM CITY MARILAO (044) 7112526 • SM CITY BAGUIO (074) 6197681 • ELIZABETH MALL (032) 2563679 (032) 2563681

Per DTI-NCR Permit No.A3-163 Series of 2004

0% Spectacular Installment Sale from SM Appliance Center and Bankard

SM APPLIANCE Center and Bankard brings interest-free installment shopping through the 0% **SPECTACULAR INSTALLMENT SALE.** Now is the time to grab the latest appliances, gadgets and gizmos you've long been dreaming of owning!

Enjoy 0 percent shopping at the **0% SPECTACULAR INSTALLMENT SALE** at SM Appliance Center, SM City Fairview from March 17 to 28. Available at a wider appliance selection, the 0 percent interest offer is open to all Bankard holders on the 3, 6 or 12-month Pay Easy Plan for a minimum purchase of only P3,000. Avail of this spectacular offer! Simply charge your purchases to your Bankard Mastercard, Bankard Visa and Bankard My Dream credit cards and your dream appliances are yours!

You can also catch the next wave of the **0% SPECTACULAR INSTALLMENT SALE** at the SM Appliance Center in SM City Bacoor from April 28 to May 9. Shop at the SM Appliance Center and Bankard **0% SPECTACULAR INSTALLMENT SALE** today!

LADIES' SHOES
SABATO
Square toed shoes
with chunky heels
SABATO
We've got it all for you!
SM
DEPARTMENT STORE
QUIAPO • MAKATI • CUBAO • HARRISON • NORTH EDSA • STA MESA • ORTIGAS • LAS PINAS • BACOOR • FAIRVIEW
MANILA • PAMPANGA • ILOILO • CEBU • DAVAO • CAGAYAN DE ORO • BICUTAN • LUCENA • BAGUIO • MARILAO

HOT SUPER SAVER WEEKEND at SM SUPERMALLS

Hot summer buys and super savings on great selections highlight the 3-day weekend sale slated on March 19, 20 and 21 at SM City Sta. Mesa, SM City Fairview, SM Supercenter Sucat and SM City Iloilo.

The simultaneous super 3-day sale event in all four malls offers shoppers a variety of value buys on a wide selection of items including apparel, fashion accessories, babycare essentials, toys, personal care products, groceries, IT gadgets, home furnishings and many many more.

Shoppers are invited to take advantage of the super special bargains offered by participating mall establishments.

Super-value shopping hours at SM City Fairview, SM City Sta. Mesa and SM Supercenter Sucat is from 10 am to 10 pm, while shopping hours at SM City Iloilo is slated at 9 am to 10 pm.

SUPER
mallwide
SALE
Mar 19 • 20 • 21
up to 50% off
on great selections

SM City ILOILO

9am – 10pm

Per DTI-Iloilo Permit No. 3-04-66, Series of 2004

SM City STA. MESA

SM City FAIRVIEW

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT

mall hours: 10am – 10pm

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 1036, Series of 2004

GREAT BUYS IN FAIRVIEW

It's gonna be a weekend of super shopping as SM City Fairview holds it's first mallwide sale of the year! Enjoy special treats and fabulous discounts from the wide range of shops, restos and specialty stores!

City Fairview shoppers will also be treated to an exciting midnight bazaar from 3 pm to 12 mn.

VALUE SHOPPING AT SM CITY STA. MESA

Also known as SM Centerpoint, City Sta. Mesa has always been the favorite shopping hub of students and young professionals. Bargain hunters will surely go crazy over loads and loads of discounts offered by trendy fashion stores, sports and leisure hubs, and hip novelty shops!

Don't miss the midnight bazaar on March 19 to 21 from 6 pm to 10 pm.

HYPER SHOPPING IN SUCAT

Canned foods, fresh meat and veggies, assorted fruits, processed delicacies, beauty products, personal care items, trendy fashions, household appliances, home furnishings... the list is endless as you shop at the Super SM Hypermarket! SM Supercenter Sucat has become the favorite shopping destination of families and wholesalers alike! The mall also houses other specialty shops and fastfood chains.

SUPER MALLING IN ILOILO CITY

SM City Iloilo has a rich share of stores and eateries that cater to the hip and trendy lifestyle of a growing number of Ilonggos.

MOVIES IN THE CITY

See the latest flicks at the SM CINEMA during the weekend sale and "Get FREE movie pass with every three (3) movie tickets. "Also get FREE popcorn for every two(2) large softdrinks!"

A WEEKEND OF VALUES

"FREE Pigeon Baby Wipes for a minimum of P150 single receipt purchase-only at the SM Foodcourt.